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THE  
**Price Inevitable**  
OF THE  
Confessions of Irene



★Publishers Weekly

24, Oct. 02



the 1990s, the number of people in the United States who are 65 years of age or older is projected to increase from 20 million to 30 million, and the number of people 75 years of age or older is projected to increase from 10 million to 15 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 1996).

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“ — DO I *LOOK* LIKE A MARRIED WOMAN ! ”

(Page 69)

THE  
PRICE INEVITABLE

'A

OR THE

CONFESSIONS OF IRENE

An Autobiography

BY

AURELIA I. SIDNER.



NEW YORK  
THE POPULAR PUBLISHING CO.

1902,



258124

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## PREFACE.

The writer has taken a page from her life and has given it to the world.

She has laid bare the soul of a woman, that some other woman (or some man) might profit thereby.

The people in this work live ; each going their way, as if a tragedy of the soul had not been enacted in their midst.

The names have been changed, and such events omitted as might lead too readily to the discovery of their identity. Each the victim of a circumstance over which they had no control, yet the *price* is demanded of one who, in ignorance, fell the victim of past environment.

It is with fear and trembling that a young author greets the public, and

*Preface.*

like an actor, with downcast eyes and beating heart waits for an encore.

In this autobiography of an erring woman the author has given the best she had, believing that—give to the world the best you have and the best will come back to you.

AURELIA.

## THE PRICE INEVITABLE.

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DEAR GRACE,—

Here I am at last ; across the Arizona desert, in a mining camp.

Foothills in every direction ; as far as the eye can see loom up great, barren, gray-colored foothills, and the mountains behind and above them ; and as one looks one feels imprisoned, and as if there was no escape beyond those gloomy ranges and the awful burning alkali desert between them and anywhere. We were all day coming from Bowie.

The railroad has just been finished from there to Globe a day or two.

In a small freight caboose, filled with Indians and Mexicans and a mixture of both, I was the only woman, excepting two girls, with wide-brimmed, high-

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crowned Mexican hats shading their faces.

They drank beer out of bottles, with two men, who wore the same style hat. And it was only by their long hair that I could tell the two were women.

All I could see was the bobbing of the tall crowned hats and the flash of beer bottles. You can imagine how uncomfortable I felt in that hot, dusty car.

We stopped unreasonably long at every station, and some one said it was to load on wood ; that they were burning wood in the engine. And some one asked the passengers "if they wanted to get off and assist." I do not know whether it was meant for a joke or not. We just *crawled* along, and nothing to see, nothing but the grays and browns of the sandy desert, and tall, ugly cactus standing up here and there stiff and forbidding—like sentinels on guard. There was a boy in the narrow seat with me who had some great idea of going out there to make a fortune.

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He was so full of hope and assurance, and, *so evidently*, such a mamma's-boy, and a California boy at that, I felt sorry for the disappointment in store for him. Going out to "rough it," and showing me with so much pride his new six-inch collar (I believe it was six). They probably do not wear *any* out there. Just as it got dark we stopped at San Carlos, and all at once the car swarmed with Indians and colored soldiers, and I couldn't imagine what we had struck until I remembered it must be the Indian reservation.

The next station was Globe. I climbed off the car, down a steep bank, fell over loose rails and boards, and at last found a 'bus and eventually my aunt's house. There was a depot, but I didn't see it.

This morning I have been out looking at the hills, and the one narrow, crooked street, called "Main," and all I can see as I let my glance travel down the street are saloon signs. Just across the street is a rather imposing

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brick structure, which reads in large letters across the second story, "Odd Fellows' Hall."

Everywhere else are dobies and shacks and tents and trails leading to them. Chinese restaurants abound, and there is a fair sprinkling of Indians along the street, and some quite pretty Apache squaws.

Aunt has a millinery store, and it hides half the front of her "dobie residence," and we reach the rose-covered porch through a little yard that runs along the side of the frame store building. Aunt has a tree and a few shrubs, and a sickly rose vine; goodness knows how she made them grow, for it is all the green I have seen so far in Arizona. Girls who sing in the saloons buy the sweetest Parisian hats. I don't know where they display them. Uncle has a saloon almost opposite aunt's store. Don't be shocked! He keeps no "singers." The wives and daughters of the saloon keeper, the lawyer, the banker, the butcher and baker all hob-

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nob together in the City of Globe. Therefore one's social standing (?) is not questioned, so my mind, which was troubled on that score while coming out, is at peace.

All is novel and new, and I like it, and *why* am I here? Obeying my aunt's urgent and persistent invitations, I came out here—to begin life anew.

The dear old man, who has been father, friend and lover, gladly secured my transportation, and sent me with encouraging words and unselfish devotion out of his life, to something he believes will make a good woman of me.

So, giving up the ease, the luxury, the art and music which I love, but in which I progressed all too slowly, I have come out into the great West—the land of new beginning and promise, to find: 'the path which leads to light and truth again' (as Ella Wilcox puts it), and which *few* erring women find.

Your loving,

IRENE.



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DEAR GRACE,—

Last night, for the first time in five years I graced (shall I say society ?) a Christmas dance, and a mixed crowd, surely, such as only a mining camp could gather under one roof.

Properly chaperoned by my fat, little aunt, I went, and received—more than my share of attention.

From the city, dressed in the latest mode, and the niece of the well-known old settler, Mrs Dunphy, I was, so I found, some one of importance.

Aunt presented to me a tall, dark fellow, with the blackest eyes ; part Spanish, she afterward told me. I was surprised to see that he was dressed in most correct evening suit, as were also two or three others. He laughed when I said, “Mr. Morehouse, my Eastern friends told me that all the men out here, in this wild and woolly west, wore their trousers in their boot-tops, a huge leather belt around their waist, and, perhaps, a colored handkerchief around their throat in place of a cravat ;

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I see I have been misinformed." He said: " You may see that style of dress if you go down the street in the evening, and look at the crowd lined up in front of the saloons, some just off day-shift, and others going on night-shift; but you will never see it at our dances." Just then a sweet-faced girl, in a pale blue organdie, came up and he introduced his sister; then he added: " We are more civilized out here than you imagine, I fancy." Then he asked me for a dance and seemed surprised and disappointed when I told him I didn't dance.

Other young men were presented and I found myself besieged for dances, and, for the first time in my life, I was sorry I didn't know how.

Although, in my younger days, I attended the dances and other functions given by the "exclusive set" in our small town, I never *cared* to dance. I was a dreamer then, and didn't care for society or people, or boys, or anything; but to wander with my dog,

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Frank, around some dilapidated old mill, some mysterious bit of wood. A group of trees always contained something of awe for me, and at twilight I loved to mount a horse, usually a broncho, and dash away over the prairie and felt like riding on and on until I should reach the edge of the future, infinitely distant and so alluring. I have always lived in the future, until now—I seem to feel I have reached that edge and it is already the present.

So you see, I thought dancing silly and only for common people, and I—I was so much more than ordinary. Oh, the conceit of the very young! Everything pertaining to themselves assumes such absurd proportions and importance. I was the bud of a flower like Bernhardt or Rosa Bonheur, Ella Wilcox and Patti. I too had a voice then. How much is due to the loss of that? When through some accident we lose our sphere in life, are we evermore to be like lost souls wandering around in

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space? Are all the mistakes of my life traceable back to a lost voice; a lost vocation?

Anyway, these were, each one, a goddess to me, and from them I learned many early lessons. I went to dances more to study other boys and girls, and learn why and how I was different from them.

And when some young man would talk to me, and I would look up into his face with soul-lit questioning eyes, he would say in a husky whisper, "*Don't* look at me like that!" All the time I was looking through and beyond him. I am telling you all this to see if *you* can understand my downfall.

And now I am going to be more common than ever; I am going to learn to dance.

No one here knows that I have been married, and that very real part of my life seems only some vague and unpleasant dream. I scarcely ever think of it—it was so long ago. And in passing as a single woman I do not mean to

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deceive any more than I do by appearing as a young girl of nineteen when I am a woman, so I am Miss Sisson, as I have been all my life, since my foster-mother adopted me—excepting those six weeks of married life, of which no one but mamma and one or two relatives ever knew. Can I help it if I act like a girl? Even after *all* my experience, my sinful past, if I deceive people without trying, must I confess to them? Common-sense teaches better than that. But if one loved—what then? Oh, well, I'll not trouble about anything not apt to happen! I have been a woman of Bohemia, of the demi-monde, almost, but not quite of the street.

My one desire is to be good, and some time—to be loved.

Your own,

IRENE.

P. S.—It is against my principles to write a postscript; I never like to do anything all other women do. But I want to tell you about one fellow at the

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dance, who stood out some way from all the rest. He was very tall, quite light in color, and such a proud look in his face. He didn't dance, only about twice. And do you know, I wonder if he really *is* some one a little above the rest, as he might be only an ordinary miner. One can never tell. I have seen men look like that, and have been so disappointed when I found out what they were or how shallow. But to-day that distinguished looking boy is in my mind, and I didn't meet him, and I guess he didn't *see* me. Am going to write very long letters, because this is a new life to me, and I want you to know just how I succeed or—fail. Some way my heart feels sad.

I.

DEAR GRACE,—

First of all, I have learned to dance; and though indifferently, have plenty of partners. Aunt's house is full of callers, that is, in the evening. People call more evenings, I suppose because so

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many sleep in the day, owing to the queer hours a camp enforces, and it is part of the "camping out" life people live here. Being the first new girl for some time in the camp, I am accorded the attention always bestowed upon the new girl. And otherwise, my seeming popularity would be due to the nice lunches and excellent wines my aunt serves our guests. I don't suppose it is really good food at times; but this is Arizona, and then a terrible fear makes me tremble when I think it is neither my aunt's hospitality nor me, but Harry Smith's piano recitals, and my vanity reels. Mr. Smith, though but twenty-four, is quite bald, has nice gray eyes, small, thick lips and rather small stature, but *how* he *can* play!—not much classical, but opera and rag-time, and it suits all the boys who come, and then he is extremely witty. There isn't a piano at his boarding-house, the "Buffalo," out near the mine of the same name, where he is assistant surveyor, so talking of music one night at

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a dance, I told him to come and practice on my aunt's. He seemed pleased to accept. Aunt hates my music, Chopin Nocturnes and Funeral Marches and such things, so she welcomes Mr. Smith with open arms. Cousin gives me dancing lessons every day.

This letter does not sound like a woman with a past. But I am happy and so gloriously giddy. Never dreamed it would be so easy to be good and happy, though I have heard those two words are synonymous. Let me forget what I am. Only a girl full of fun and fond of boyish company and so tired, so tired of men of the world. Men past thirty seem so evil-minded, so insinuating and even their kindness prompted by such selfish motives. Let me enjoy this society of uncontaminated youth, younger than I by at least five years, but what of that!

What if in the depths of my heart I am old, old, with girlhood six years behind! What if I choose to forget, and, can, with all my unrealized ambi-



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tions, mistakes and folly ! If I do, *who* is to pay the price ? There is always a price for every wish gratified, everything we attain, everything we enjoy. And who shall say—it sometimes seems exorbitant ?

Your loving

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

Last night at the Odd Fellows' Hall, there was a "bal en masque," to celebrate St. Valentine. A western town never lets a chance to celebrate *anything* pass by. I represented Carmen, a pretty real one, as you can imagine. My costume was red velvet skirt, black velvet bodice, sash of yellow silk, and jet spangles glittering all over me, just *lots* of them, red hose and slippers, and a lace mantillé over my head, caught back with red roses. I had my eyelashes blackened to make them heavy, and, with my dark hair and eyes and petite form, I *think* I looked the part. People often ask me if I am not Span-

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ish ; my French blood of course, and aunt's daughter-in-law, my cousin's wife, *is* Spanish, so of course they imagine I am too, and aunt talks it like a native.

My newly acquired chum, Mrs. Castro, a three months' bride, who came here from Los Angeles, was in decided contrast to me ; impersonating a La France rose, she was a dream ! With her wavy golden brown hair piled high, her round big gray eyes and pink and white complexion, she was a picture indeed. She has a beautiful round form, and is about five feet five inches—just a nice height, I think.

While her costume was being made in aunt's shop she came and helped, and we would go in the parlor and talk, and she would play the Flower Song ; her touch is good. Well, she talked all the time about a Mr. Whitmore, a gentleman who boards where she does, and Mr. Smith also, and several of the boys I have met at the Buffalo. Mr. Castro is employed in the mine, and

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Mr. Whitmore is a surveyor in the same mine. They seem to spend a great deal of time together, and for a three months' bride I think she talks too much about this strange young man. She had finally aroused my curiosity, so when she presented a tall, fair, debonnaire boy of about twenty-two, with fierce-looking eyes, I was duly impressed, and you can imagine how much so when I tell you it was the *proud chap* I saw at my first dance here, Christmas, and once since, in a trap with the superintendent of the Buffalo mine, Mr. Whitmore. Indeed, I no longer wondered why his name is forever on her lips! He is handsome, and—she does not love her husband.

He asked for the next dance, and we took our places for a waltz quadrille. And then, with a searching look at me, he said: "Your eyes are *made up*." Now, wasn't that stupid? I *was* surprised. I looked up at him, and no doubt I looked as saucy as I felt. He had thrown down the gauntlet; I

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picked it up. With frankness I replied : " Yes, for the part, and yours ? Do you use belladonna ? " He asked : " Why do you ask that ? " and he looked cross. " Oh," I said, " Your eyes are so dilated they don't look natural, and I can't see if they are gray, and, I adore *gray* eyes." He only looked crosser than ever. We danced, that is, he did, I could not keep step with him at all ; to tell the truth, I was a little afraid of him, and did my worst. After the dance we found seats together, and the other boys gathered around about three rows deep and clamored for dances and tried to steal each other's waltzes and it was all very silly, because I *do* dance so badly. I don't know whether it was the character, or because a strange boy had found me, or just what, but I learned the sensation a belle enjoys. It is nice to be popular, but it is more a matter of chance than because a girl deserves to be singled out so. It is not always either the most beautiful nor most accomplished, nor sweetest man-

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nered girl. One or two boys sometimes makes a girl *the* girl, and all the other boys follow like sheep. I didn't want to leave Mr. Whitmore at once. The Spanish boy, Mr. Morehouse, knelt down, first spreading his handkerchief on the floor, and fastened the strap on my slipper, and just then a fellow in a tennis suit came up and claimed the next waltz. He had a Vandyke beard and wonderful eyes and he was blonde, and we did not dance badly. When I was again seated, Mr. Whitmore came at once and joined me, and requested the next two-step. Mrs. Castro looked at us and smiled, and I wondered if she had talked as much about me to him as she has about him to me.

He pleases me, because, he is very near my ideal—if I have one—tall and fair and college-bred, and such a superior air, though he says rude things, and, gracious! is anything but polite. As we began by being rude and not brilliant, I said: "I have seen you before, once at a Christmas dance and you

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looked so 'stuck up,' so utterly unapproachable, I decided you were either some one or quite the reverse. Really I didn't care to meet you." My! His eyes snapped and he knit his brows and looked fierce. I suppose I *was* rude. "Well, I like *that*!" he said. He must have liked it, because he kept my side all the evening, whenever he could get near me.

He didn't talk much, and I cannot talk unless some one draws me out. I do not believe he is much used to society, not in the "Four Hundred" of Los Angeles, where his home is, at any rate. He does not know how to say *nice* things or talk small talk like other men I have met. He seems such an aristocrat though. But then his upper lip is short, and he has such awfully penetrating eyes. Well, dear me! all this about a man I have only spoken to once, and in a crowd.

People, aunt's friends, told her I was the belle, so she is happy. But I do not deserve all this deference and respect.

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I don't deserve it. I should be buried in sackcloth and ashes, as any other repentant sinner. Am I repentant? Or only masquerading? Am I wrong in deceiving these good people and going in their midst like a nice wooly lamb, all soft and white? Something around my heart aches and feels troubled just the same.

Yours in doubt,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

He hadn't asked to call, and so I was surprised when I opened the door to see Mr. Whitmore standing there. He came in and my aunt was not in and we had a nice chat.

He told me so much about himself. He has been here over a year and he is lonesome and a wee bit home-sick. And he longs to see his sisters of whom he seems very proud.

At Gerome he began work in the mines, and worked in a ditch half full of water, and slept in a little two-

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by-four room at night, and that shows he is made of the right stuff, I think. With such boylike pride he talked of his home and his people! Dear boy! I had nothing to talk about, so I drew him out. He is so straightforward and frank and serious, half boy, half man and wholly interesting—different from any fellow I ever knew.

I made another silly remark as he arose to leave, I said: "I don't like to see that Fedora hat you wear?" He asked: "And why not?"

I said: "It reminds me of a friend, a very dear friend, I left in the East." He laughed softly, "Well I am sorry to have caused you annoyance, I shall not wear it again." He stood a moment at the door, "I cannot tell you how I have enjoyed the evening and may I—?" I interrupted him in my nervous way, with "We shall be pleased to see you often, and I am sorry my aunt was not here; she will be glad to have you come." He thanked me and said "good night."





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I am stupid and say such silly things to one who *does* impress me. I use bad grammar, too, and all that ; and on some blockhead I will waste actual brilliancy of intellect, grow eloquent and be surprised at myself. But I am afraid of any one I desire to please, and his hat did remind me of a handsome young man whom I loved for his beauty only. He pleased the animal nature that is in some women as well as in men, I never could have felt serious toward him and it was only a flirtation ; but I did miss him a little, and Mr. Whitmore's gray hat did make me think of him a little regretfully. This young man has character. I do not know what is proper any more. Anyway it seems all right for a girl to receive gentlemen in the evening alone here, and of course I am the same as a girl *now*.

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

I went out to the Buffalo hotel last night, to a birthday party in honor of

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Mrs. Castro, just the age when I too was a bride, nineteen. But what a difference, and what a space between! Ah, if the space between could only be blotted out or lived over again—forgotten! Useless regret. They were blowing out the candles on the cake when I made some remark apropos to his call of last night and he blushed like a school-boy and the boys began to chaff him. Seems he was late at a club the boys have formed, and they waited for him and he couldn't give an account of himself when he came. But I don't see why he need blush because they found out. He seemed so happy in the progressive Euchre game when he had a *man* for partner. Oh, he is such an indifferent boy. Seems not to care for the girls one bit, and they are very sweet, though rather demure and quiet. I thought Western girls were full of life and noise, but the ones here seem so afraid.

Mr. McNess drove me out. He is a nice round plump young man, with

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thin light hair, and blue eyes with large pupils, and a sweet mouth that you want to kiss, and even teeth, and he laughs a great deal and pays one such exaggerated attention—as if one was a Queen or some high personage, and he is very popular with the men around town, and in the lodges, where he stands high. And they say “his stories” are all right. The old women say he is very fast, and at first aunt objected to me going with him any place, but he is at my heels all the time, you can just fancy him stepping on the tail of my gown everywhere, and at last aunt gave in and so did I. And he was so nice and attentive to aunt, she likes him very much after all.

Aunt chaperones me, or not, as she pleases. And it does not matter here. Listen to me! As if I ever had a chaperone in all my life! Perhaps it would have been better if I had.

Well we had a nice party and Mr. Whitmore looked at me as if he would like to take me home; anyway I was

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vain enough to think so, but then he could have taken me out, only, maybe he could not afford the carriage, and Mr. McNess behaved very nice and I do not believe he is bad.

It is not so hard to be good as I thought it would be.

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

He and Harry called together last night. I call him Mr. Whitmore, of course, but I dropped into calling Mr. Smith, Harry, at once, and I would like to call the other one Cecil, but I do not want him to think me too familiar, and I want him to think I am more intimate with Mr. Smith.

Harry played lovely, as usual, Cavalier Rusticana, I think it was. Cecil and I sat on the divan looking at pictures. Once, my hand was under the page of a magazine and he slipped his under and squeezed my fingers ever so lightly. I quickly withdrew my hand and looked serious, because I suppose that is what

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I should do ; he laughed softly and then had the audacity to paste a postage stamp on my face. I objected, and in the tussle my hair came down. I went into my aunt's room to rearrange it and he followed and turned me around as I stood before the mirror, to see how I looked with my hair down, so he said, and he must have thought I looked nice that way, for he took me right in his arms and pressed me against his coat. He said : " Let us try the pose we have just been looking at, in the book."

For an instant I was passive, and then, as he bent his face near mine, closer and closer I drew away. He asked, oh so softly : " Why not ? " I held him off with both hands as I replied " It isn't proper." Why is it that anything we most want isn't proper ? Just then some one rapped. Sticking a couple of pins in my hair I went to the door. Harry was still playing. The Spanish boy had called, and after a while two more boys came, and then in a few

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minutes, one more. Six in all, and aunt not in; she never is and I don't know where she goes to, but I am accustomed to men. God pity me! So with Harry's help they were entertained. Cecil looked bored. The girls don't come very often. There is something, and always has been, about me that the girls do not like. I never did take well with my own sex, yet I go in raptures over a lovely girl. I love young women but older women, so many, are disagreeable. After they reach thirty they are not nice any more, and say so many spiteful things and are complaining and critical, etc.

I am sure it is not proper for one girl to receive six young men in the evening, even in Arizona. But if aunt *will* slip out, what can I do?

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

At the dancing class, I wore a girlish red organdie and a Cyrano chain, and I did look petite and girlish. Cecil asked

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me to sit out several dances, and he told me he wants to go to Stanford two more years to complete his course. He wants to learn enough about mineralogy to command a large salary, three or four hundred dollars per month.

And then he said: "I shall not marry until I am about twenty-eight, and I shall not marry a girl who has very much money nor one who is penniless, either. She must have some money, and I some. I don't want to have to say, 'Old girl, can you let me have a dollar,' nor do I want her to always be begging for money. I shall buy her a dress once in a while, of course."

I said: "Oh, when you fall in love, you will not think of all that, the subject of money will not occur then."

He replied with dignity: "I shall never fall so very badly in love. I am not made that way."

Then I grew confidential and said: "*I* am engaged to quite an elderly man

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of wealth." He raised his eyebrows at me. That was not quite true; but coming out here I met an old friend of my aunt's, a man who is engaged in mines, and he said: "You will have proposals of marriage before you are a month in Globe, and I desire to ask one favor—do not accept any until I come, I shall be there within the month." Well, he came and proposed, and as an extra inducement offered me a journey to Australia, Japan and Europe. Just a month ago, I would not have hesitated very long, the temptation to travel is always great. But when he came I had changed; but I told Cecil, to hear what he would say. Cecil looked at me very seriously and said earnestly: "And you don't love him?"

"Well, no; he is quite old, you know."

"Then you must not marry him," he said decidedly. "You would be doing wrong and you would be unhappy. Promise me you won't!"



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Now isn't he rather inconsistent ?

I laughed but gave no reply. Really, he looked so concerned and pleading. Then I asked : "What are *you* going to marry for—when you are twenty-eight ?"

Without answering me, he continued : "Don't throw yourself away like that." When he says he is not going to marry until he is twenty-eight a chill creeps all over me and I turn my eyes away. If he has put it off so long, why is he always talking about it.

Harry says that after an evening with me, Cecil weighs and remembers everything I say and do. I often find him looking at me intently, as if I were a child to be amused at and indulged. The young man who shared my seat on the way from Bowie was at the dance, and they have named him "Cuffs," on account of that collar, and it *is* higher than all the others I have seen.

The other night, Cecil and I sat on the steps and he put his arm around me. I felt confused and wiggled away,

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and I didn't explain myself clearly about my ambitions and failures, which I had started to tell him about, and he answered me by saying :

“ You are young yet. My sister was twenty-five when she married and they are very happy, and——”

I was so angry, I did not pay any attention to the rest. As if my only ambition is to marry ! And some way I never explain and he goes away with that impression. Oh, he does not understand me at all. He always talks as if he thought I am dying to get married, and he thinks I have given up the elderly man because he asked me to. Our conversations never amount to anything. I am disgusted.

Your own,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

We were home last night, Aunt and I. Aunt had on a baby blue tea-gown with a loose front and a coquettish little blue ribbon bow perched up in her hair over one ear. Her hair is curly

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and quite brown but her face is too full ; she weighs over two hundred and she is only about five feet and two inches, and her eyes are gray and awfully fat over them. She does not shut her mouth very much and her lips go down at the corner ever so far, whenever she is vexed. She was seated at the table in the center of the room and had one leg crossed over the other ; she sits that way so much, and her leg is so large at the ankle, looks as if it was bottom side up. And uncle says she has feet like a bear, because her ankle comes right in the middle of her foot. She was reading, " Pearls From Many Seas," when Harry and Cecil came, and after greeting them, she kept right on reading and read some aloud and it was funny and we all laughed and I didn't have a chance to say much all evening, so I kept up a powerful lot of thinking. And then they got off on styles and I woke up and said : " I want a stiff man's shirt-waist bosom," and everybody laughed. Of course I meant a

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man's stiff shirt, etc. After they had gone, I followed Aunt into her room and talked her to sleep and I *did* make *bold* assertions and the window was open next to a boarding house full of miners, and I hope no one heard. I said : " Aunt, Mr. Whitmore is a good moral young man, he is of good family, Mrs. Castro says. He is ambitious, determined and has ability. Of course he has no money or he would continue at college, but he is just the type that will reach great heights. *I am going to win him !*" Aunt looked too stunned to speak. I knew it would not meet with her views at all. She has some one else picked out for me. Anyway, I resumed : " I do not love him. I admire and respect him. I could look up to him, and a woman *must* do that. I have never really loved ; my life has unfitted me to love, I suppose. I had a fondness once for a long-haired pallid faced musician with somber eyes, but it was his wonderful music, not him, that fascinated me."

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"Irene, I am surprised! You can never get Cecil Whitmore. Can't you see he thinks you are below him? Besides, when he learns you have been married—"

I interrupted her there. "He need never learn that. Cecil does not like widows; he said so. He shall never learn I am one."

"He is sure to find it out and John is far more suitable for you, he has money in the bank and he gets ten dollars a day as shift foreman and he loves you, and you don't treat him right when your *swell* fellows are here," she said, warming up.

"Oh Aunt, you know I couldn't ever care for him; he is all right, but he isn't what I want, and Cecil won't find out. Earl went to Denver when we parted and no one knows I am married but you and mamma and hardly any one else. And I won't tell Cecil, no I won't!"

"Well you'll be sorry if you don't, and you are not fit to marry a young man like that; you are too old, and,

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think of your past—nothing can change that. Now with John, it is different, he might marry you anyway.”

“Well I would think more of him if *he was* more particular. I don’t care—I will have Cecil! An impulsive moment and he will utter words he will afterward be too honorable to retract. But what a designing creature I am!”

“I should think you are; I’m shocked! I never thought you were such a girl. But you’ll change your mind and now go to bed—I’m sleepy.”

So I bid aunt good-night but I shall not change my mind and I may be designing, but I do not care.

Your loving

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

We are becoming so well acquainted. He slips away from Harry, and comes alone now. Everyone notices his attentions to me, although Mr. McNess is supposed to be my most “attentive and encouraged.” Cecil acts as if he

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really cared a little for me, but he seems always to hold himself in restraint. Such a dreadful thing happened, but I am going to write just what led up to it as it happened !

When he came last night I was playing Cavalier Rusticana, and he walked in without rapping, and leaned over me at the piano. I didn't look up, but began that doleful march, Funebre. He put his hands on mine, and lifted them off the keys.

"Don't, for heaven's sake !" he said !

So you see there is no longer any formality at all. He showed me a letter he got from a Los Angeles girl, and he seemed so elated. She wanted to know why he hadn't written for three months, and if he didn't want to write, to keep on being silent, and it was signed Ethel. *I hate that name.* I said : "You are engaged to her, I suppose ?"

"No, I am not engaged to *any* girl," he said, with such a lordly air I could not help saying : "I guess none of them will have you."

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This happened the other evening, and it was quite a coincidence for me to receive a similar letter from that Fedora-hat-young-man this evening. He wanted to know why I hadn't written for three months, and if I had found some one else I cared more for, and how much he missed me, etc. Well, of course I showed that to Cecil, and he did not seem to like it one bit. And he frowned and looked cross. We went over to the dancing school, and I flirted with the boys, and danced like mad, and was oh, so gay!

I just thought he would never care for a girl too easily won. She must seem charming to others, and if popular so much the better, the more gay and light of heart and seemingly unattainable, the more a boy like Cecil would feel drawn to her. There are so many young men like that.

So I flirted with the others, and said rude things to him. Now I wonder if he thinks me shallow. I don't care one bit for the others. Soon as he had a



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chance he came to me, and said: "Let us go for a stroll; it is so warm in here."

"But what will dame Grundy say, and my aunt?" I answered, looking up at him, and shrugging my shoulders.

"Oh, defy Mrs. Grundy, and we can slip out without your aunt seeing us. I want to talk to you; will you come?" He looked so entreating and we were near the door, and I saw that aunt's attention was engaged in the other direction, so I said: "Well ——" and we slipped out real quietly, like two guilty children.

We walked across the street to my aunt's house, and sat down on the veranda. He took my hand and held it in his, as he had done once before. Something was said about electricity, and he asked me if I would be negative, and then quite irreverently if I would say no if he asked me something; with a meaning I could only guess. Then as I was trying to think of something bright to say, he looked at me mean-

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ingly, and said: "I have an important question to ask you some time."

I said: "Why not ask it now?"

He was silent a while, and then said: "No, but some day, come out to the mine some day and I will ask you then."

Now if it is important why could he not have asked me right away?

Some one kept coming to an olla for water behind the latticed end of the porch. It annoyed us, as they seemed to stop to listen; so we went into the house. The moonlight flooded the room and we sat down on the divan, not thinking to turn on the electric light. Not thinking at all; just absorbed in each other. Youth is so complete within itself.

As we sat down, he said: "*Why* do you flirt with all those fellows?"

I laughed and said nothing.

"Can't you be serious?" he said, half angry. "*Won't* you? *Won't* you be serious with *me*?"—in such a softly entreating voice. Oh, what seduc-

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tiveness men *can* throw into their voices !

I laughed teasingly, keeping up my rôle.

He continued : " You must drop Mr. McNess if you go in my class." Then he added abruptly, " You do not treat me like the others, you act different when with me."

I spoke then. All the while I had been laughing softly and merely murmuring words just to tantalize. I like to laugh at men when they *are serious*. I said : " Of course not, of course I do not treat you the same, do I not show *you* the preference ? Do I not walk with you out to the gate, when you leave, hold your hand, or let you hold mine, I mean, sit nearest to you in a room, bid *you* good night *last*, and even leave a dance to walk with you ? Seems to me I treat you *better* than any of the others." I said all this in a light, flippant manner and he actually seemed angry at my jesting.

He asked impatiently : " Why do

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you talk like that?" And I could see his eyes just glowing at me.

"What do you *want* me to say, then?"

"Don't you know?" and he bent over me so close I shoved up into the corner of the divan among the pillows.

"Well," I said, "do you want me to say I love you? Do you——" I paused because he leaned over me so, with so much intensity, crushing me back among the pillows, his face so near mine and his breath so warm and his eyes *did* glow, with some kind of emotion. Just as he had me smothered back in the corner of the divan, my aunt fairly burst in upon us.

How can I tell you what she said? She said it all so fast and furious, and her face worked so hideously. Her loose mouth twisted all over her face in her wrath, as she flipped on the light with a snap. Had we been the most guilty of culprits she could not have been more angry. Among the things she flung at me were: "What were you

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doing here in the dark? A pretty way to act. I had you come out here to make something of you and here you act like a saloon singer; you are the talk of the whole dancing school!"

In vain we begged her pardon and tried to explain. I said, "Why, Aunt, I do not see any great impropriety in leaving the dance, and the room was quite light, we didn't think of that, and Mr. Whitmore is a gentleman. You know very well couples often leave the hall and go down town for soda and ice-cream."

She only grew worse and Cecil added his apologies to mine.

"The minute you went out Mrs. Castro said to me. 'Well! Irene and Cecil leaving the dance so early! And he is such a stickler for propriety; cannot care much for Irene's reputation,'—and her husband said: 'If that is the way young people here do, go out to walk, you may remain home, Pearl.'"  
Aunt turned on Cecil: "Mr. Whitmore would not leave a dance alone with a

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young lady in Los Angeles. He doesn't think you are as good as his city friends. No, he does not respect you." Such a tirade as she flung at us both!

Cecil arose to leave: "I am very sorry, Mrs. Dunphy; the blame is all mine. I asked Irene to come; what would not be proper in a city might be all right here where there is less conventionality. I assure you neither one of us thought it any harm, nor can I see any, for my part. Am very sorry to have been the cause of this scene," and bidding us good night he bowed and took his departure, and I simply wished the floor would open and swallow me. Aunt walked out and sat down on the porch. Now was not that awful?

The more I think of it the more I hate my aunt. Yes I do, I'll never forgive her; she has spoiled everything!

By misconstruing my actions she has given Cecil something to think about. "Had me come out here to make something of me." Indeed! Now what can he think of *that*! I may as well have

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confessed: "Cecil, I have been a fast girl and aunt is trying to reform me."

I shall always wonder what he would have said if she hadn't interrupted! I have a premonition this means sorrow for me. Dear! dear! How *could* she appear so coarse and make such a vulgar scene, and all for what?

Your unhappy

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

I am just going to send you Cecil's note and mine. Am too put out to write a letter. My aunt and I have not spoken about it since. I think she is sorry she said so much and I am getting more angry at her every hour, I thought I owed Cecil an apology and of course I could not criticise my aunt to him, though I wish I could, and I wish I could go away too, but my money has got so low, I can't. Well, here is my note.

"MY DEAR MR. WHITMORE:—

I regret exceedingly the occurrence of last night. The blame was wholly

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mine. It was my place to guard the proprieties and I am sorry my failure to do so subjected you to such an utterly absurd scene.

My aunt has not said anything about it to-day and I don't think she will mention it again. I trust this will not deter you from coming again soon. Mrs. Allen wishes to know if you will sing for me at their church Sunday next, as a great favor.

Yours sincerely,

IRENE SISSON."

And in the evening I received the enclosed reply :

" MY DEAR MISS SISSON :—

I have just received your note and you should not try to blame yourself for what there certainly was nothing wrong in.

Thinking it over, I really couldn't see what there was to have caused such a disturbance, and for my part, I don't believe I care for another such reprimand ; so you see, Irene, that I shall hardly be there again shortly. Don't think that I am angry with you at all,



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but it is just better that I shouldn't come.

Please tell Mrs. Allen that I shan't be able to sing, for it will take too much time.

Very sincerely,  
CECIL WHITMORE."

I am so unhappy and yet happy because he called me Irene in his letter. And I am foolish—I have read and re-read the note a dozen times and kissed his name. I shall keep it always.

Your loving  
IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

I have dressed for him every evening, and I have gone down town to see if I could meet him, and for over a week I have not seen him, except once at the post office.

I asked him if he was not coming any more and he said: "Not very soon." And he was so cool. I didn't have a chance to say much and he didn't offer to walk up the street with

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me, and I went home feeling miserable. The boys have stopped coming very often; even Harry hardly ever comes. But since Cecil has stopped, Harry comes more often. Harry made me feel so badly, he said Cecil would never come any more, and when he saw how sorry I felt, he said: "Are you getting serious toward Cecil?" Not waiting for a reply he continued: "Because he isn't with *you*. Why, if he found he was becoming fond of a girl he would chop right off and stop going to see her. He has his life all mapped out and he won't let that head of his run away with him. Anyway, if you only knew how impossible—but there—I think you have more sense, Irene!"

He ceased at last. Harry has told me all about his own girl whom he can't marry because he cannot save up enough money, and they have been engaged five years. And he is like a brother to me, that is why he talks so to me and I confide in him.

I said: "Oh, Harry, he will too

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come and you don't know a thing about it. You don't know the things he says to me, not anything I can remember and repeat; but he gives me to understand so much! And I know he has his life all planned; he has told me all that. But he might change his mind, and I don't care what you say, he was beginning to care a little."

Harry laughed and looked at me disgusted and he gave the pillow a vicious punch, and settled back on the divan while I drew my stool up closer and leaned my arm on his knee.

He said: "You don't know what you are saying. I didn't think you *were* so foolish. Why I know him so well, and I tell you he can never mean anything to you."

He looked so awfully knowing, I shuddered.

I almost whispered: "How do you know? Has he said anything? Is he—is he—engaged?" and I waited breathlessly.

"No, he is not engaged, but he

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would as soon think of cutting off his hand as of marrying you."

He said this rudely. I think he wanted to hurt—perhaps he thought it a joke. I caught my breath again and my heart almost stopped, as I said: "Do you believe that? Why, Harry, what makes you say that?"

"Oh, because—I cannot explain. But don't you waste any thought on Cecil, believe me, Irene, he does not on you, and I know."

And then I guessed what was in his mind. He does not think me good enough. Cecil is above me. That is what he means. Harry always talks very bluntly to me; the prerogative of a brother, I suppose. I felt hurt and embarrassed. But I knew he meant it all for my good, and he judges me by my surroundings here and he imagines I am nowhere near Cecil's equal, and he is proud.

I insisted: "You don't know, you don't know anything about it, and I know things I cannot tell you. And

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DEAR GRACE,

I was so jealous to-night. I just as soon tell you so as not. Mrs. Castro came in to see me, and she told me Cecil had taken her and the lady who runs the Buffalo hotel, home from dancing school the other night when I was not there; and going over a trestle she fainted and he picked her up and carried her across. She seemed to feel so happy over it, I just know she did it on purpose.

She is so beautiful I would not blame him if he had kissed her, but I should have been awfully sorry and angry.

Mr. Castro is leader of the Globe band and she stays with me sometimes when he comes in to practice, and if Cecil is in she never wants to go home when her husband calls for her. She married her husband because he is the only man she ever went with and her folks and his are intimate friends and wanted them to marry. I wish she loved him more; she might not find Cecil so attractive then—and her hus-

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band is so jealous. He does not like her to attend dances at all. If he knew how Dewey tried to kiss her in the pantry one night when she was getting a lunch! She does as she pleases at the hotel; so they were both in the pantry one night in the dark. And if he knew how Mr. McNess tries to sell her shoes all the time—that is, every time she steps into his store! And then he tells me how careless she is about lifting her skirts when he is trying on shoes, and so of course I know why he is always trying some on.

She is awfully innocent and tells me *such things* about herself and husband, and she doesn't know anything a woman ought to know, at all, and I hate to tell her. And anyway I am a girl and she is a married woman and if it were not that, I hate to destroy such innocence even in a bride! She is just the type a man could make believe anything, and I know Cecil is not that kind of a man, but she is so young and sweet and they are out there together so much

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alone and such hills to climb and such porch room and sometimes I don't trust even him.

I never knew before that I was jealous—but I am. Yes, I am, and I know it only too well now.

Your bad

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

Have done something I am ashamed of. It was this way: Mrs. Allen told me about a girl who carried cigarettes in her stocking and smoked when she had a chance. Well, the "foreman" my aunt wants me to marry, is rather vulgar and to-day he tried to tease me by saying that the "singers" were taking my boys from me. A certain one called Bee had them around her every night in the saloon and that where the "gayest little blonde fairy of them all held court" Cecil was to be found, with Harry and Mr. Morehouse and others of *my* friends.

And I thought what is the use of be-

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ing good if the boys prefer that style ?  
Of what use to pretend I am "straight?"

I do know that when Cecil leaves me he calls at the saloon for Harry on his way home, and I believe he is not a boy to fancy anything of that sort. He is too far above all that, thank God ! And yet that evening—Mrs. Allen's conversation and the "foreman's" too, with my own naturally wild nature, had its effect. I ought to know, and I do, that while men admire certain things in a bad woman, the same ways are more than repulsive to them in a woman they have thought pure. And in men's eyes there are only the two types. A woman who may be just half bad does not exist in the mind of a moral man. A woman is pure or she is not. And the opinion of a man who is not strictly moral is no opinion at all. But my ideas are blunted, or lie dormant at times.

So I put a lot of cigarettes down my stocking, and after the boys called and Mrs. Allen was engaging Harry's atten-



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tion, I slipped my hand under my dress and brought forth the cigarettes, offered them to Cecil, took one myself, lit a match on the sole of my shoe, and took a puff. Cecil followed my example, and then said: "Let *me* replace the box."

Coming from his lips it did not sound right at all. He had never spoken in that tone before. Yet I suppose he did make the proper remark, and I deserved it fully. In a second I was sorry. I am always sorry when it is too late.

I dropped cigarettes with all my other bad habits. But I had thought if they liked fast ways heaven knows I am adept enough, and it is easier to drift into the old ways than to keep out of them, and I do so want to be good. Well—I am sorry, and I *did* know better.

Your regretful

IRENE.

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DEAR GRACE,—

Cecil is always teasing me to come out to his hotel. He does not feel the same freedom about coming often since my aunt made that scene over a month ago.

Yesterday was Sunday, and I walked out there, presumably to see Mrs. Castro. I found her somewhat indisposed, and in bed.

Cecil met me in the hotel parlor, seemed to consider me *his* guest, and proceeded to entertain me. He went to his room and brought down his photos; showed me one of his home—and it is a beautiful place—and likenesses of his sisters, the single ones; one is very swell looking, and a swell dresser he informed me. And then he brought forth a picture of a very sweet girl in an oval, gold frame. Such a doll face, such superb shoulders and arms. A jealous fear swept over me, and I handed it back for fear I would drop it—I felt so trembly. “Is it Ethel?” I asked, and then I did not catch his

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answer. I said, "You must care a great deal for such a sweet-looking girl."

He replied, "No, not any more; I may have once, but I do not care for her now."

I breathed easier, but the youth and purity and sweetness of her face stabbed me. He entertained me all afternoon, and his eyes are such a steel blue. Do you know I never saw him in daylight before. The lady of the hotel asked me to have dinner with her, so I dined at her table, and Cecil at his own, with the other young men.

About dusk he said: "I have some letters to mail, and I'll walk up town with you." He always says things like that, and it makes a little chill run all through me. Now just as if he would not have gone with me anyway! He so often asks if I am going to marry Mr. McNess, and always says: "I am not going to marry until I am twenty-eight," always, always, always.

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I said: "Oh, I can go alone; it is rather dark, but——"

"I am obliged to go up town anyway," he said.

We started up town, and Harry with us, but he left us where the track leaves the main road, and Cecil and I proceeded on up the track. When we came to the trestle I wished I could faint as conveniently as Mrs. Castro did. The Arizona moonlight threw its beautiful blue light over all. No moonlight is so clear and blue and lovely as that of Arizona, and at night the earth seems so near the sky, and the stars so bright. We could see the dark outlines of the mountains and foothills, and one called the Sleeping Beauty, lying like the form of a woman against the starlit sky. The great dipper behind us and before us the mile of track up town. We had not walked far before some cinders got in my low shoes, and I sat down on the edge of the track while he took them off and emptied them out, and as he put them on again he play-

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fully tickled the bottom of my foot. We continued on up the track, stepping from tie to tie, and he didn't talk for a while, and then he said: "You haven't any cigarettes where you had them before, have you?"

I said: "No—"

He said, gently, "Don't do that again. It is tough." Then I explained how I came to do it, what Mrs. Allen said; not about the "foreman." As we walked along he sometimes had to hold me close to keep me from slipping off the ties. When we arrived in sight of the lighted street we sat down on the edge of the rails to rest.

"I am going home in September," he said.

"And I am going there also to see my sister about the same time, or later."

He seemed anxious to know just when and all about it and talked as if we should see each other there.

Oh, it comes so slow, and my heart is wholly his and I hardly know when I gave it to him. It just slipped away

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without my knowing. It is so full of love it just aches with the weight of it. And he is always saying the things that make it so heavy with pain. I know I must not let him see how I feel. I feared Harry's word would come true—and he would stay away.

But oh, how I wanted him to take me in his arms, to crush my poor hungry flesh against his, to smother me with kisses—my eyes, my hair, my lips—oh!—my mouth—famished for the touch of his!

I leaned against his knee. It seemed the warm magnetism of my close proximity must send a current through him and thrill his cold blood just a little.

But he was unmoved. Nothing could break his wonderful self control. I could not warm him. He didn't give so much as an answering pressure, but sat up all the more straight and stiff as I sat as close to him as I dared and tried to make him feel. When we parted at the gate I lost all control and said: "You are so cold."

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"Oh, am I?" and he laughed.

"Yes, you are," I snapped.

"And Mr. Morehouse, whom you stood at the gate with the other night?" he asked in a queer tone, and I wondered if he saw him, the Spanish boy, trying to kiss me.

He started to go. "Let me love you! Let me love you, won't you?" I clung to him and looked up into his face imploringly. I was mad! mad! He broke away, fairly tore himself loose, while I grabbed at him frantically. When at a safe distance, he lifted his hat to me, and I leaned against the store building and watched his tall form down the street in the moonlight until the hill hid him from view.

Oh, why was I so wild, so unladylike? What *can* he think of me! I simply could not control myself, I wanted him to just let me love him whether he reciprocated my feelings or not. I was a beggar starving for bread and I grew reckless.

When I reached my room every one

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in the house had retired. Kneeling down I prayed earnestly to God to let me have his love—for the sake of my soul, I prayed so long and earnestly. I can be good, forever, with him, and without him I shall fall again, and if again—to the very bottom! He *must* love me—I cannot live without him. Surely God will forgive my past and give me the only thing that will redeem my passionate, reckless nature.

Your loving

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

I was afraid to meet Cecil after my outburst, but he came the same as usual and I decided I would be flip-pant to make him think it all a jest.

As we were walking over to the dance I said: "I am so tired of this place, there is nothing here at all but the dancing class and the club affairs and I am so tired looking at these everlasting hills, why don't you leave so I can go too?"



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"Can't you leave? What have I to do with it?" he said coldly.

I replied in a light tone, "I cannot go while you are here."

He looked at me seriously a minute and said, with slight impatience, "You never can be serious, can you?"

You know, I say the boldest things in such a way, that while I mean every word, he thinks I am jesting.

As we sat out a dance, he leaned over close to me and looking at me with *such* an expression, whispered—"Did you mean what you said last night?"

I pretended not to understand though my heart beat rapidly, because of his look. It was like the look in his eyes the night we sat on the divan in the moonlight; but I replied, "What did I say? Really I can't remember all that I say in an evening the next day, what was it?"

He looked disappointed and straightened himself up stiffly and answered:

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"Oh, it does not matter. I don't remember either?"

I am playing the part of a flirt with him and the others, so they cannot read the love that is gnawing at my heart.

It is a woman's part to conceal, always, though her heart break.

Then I try so hard to make him jealous; that is one way to find out if a man cares. I pretended I didn't care to dance with him. We cannot dance well together—he is too tall. And he always asks Mrs. Castro first, and I don't like that. And they look so well together and he holds one so tight—with that "college hug," some people call it; anyway the Stanford boys all do it, I tell him "so divinely Harry and I dance together." When I am like that he becomes very anxious to waltz with me and ah! how I love to hear him tease, but he won't often.

We were waltzing and all at once he suddenly drew me up to him very tightly. I lost step and was confused and asked to be taken to my seat, and

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then I said: "Why, Mr. Whitmore, what made you do that; don't you know *any one* could see you?"

I looked at him reproachfully.

He squinted up his eyes at me and said: "Oh, then you didn't care—only if some one saw us?"

I said: "You are perfectly horrid! And I won't dance with you any more."

And of course little thrills were running all over me all the time.

He said: "Come, we are wasting this waltz." And I arose, and we never had such a beautiful waltz before. I wished it would never end, we kept step perfectly, so smooth and delicious, I scarcely breathed. And to think all these years I never learned to dance.

He might have felt loving toward me and he might have done it to tease me, just as he says horrid chilly things all the time and makes my heart go down to zero.      Your loving

IRENE.

*The Price Inevitable.*

DEAR GRACE,—

Cecil came straight to me at the dance and said abruptly: "I think you are treating us boys unfair."

I looked up in surprise and asked: "Why?"

He answered: "Not to tell us you are, or were, married."

I have so schooled myself to be cautious, and not be taken by surprise, I simply looked at him amused and said, lightly; "Am I really? Yes, it is mean of me, but then you never asked me before."

He looked at me intently and insisted: "But are you?"

"Why you just said so. If you say so it must be so."

"Come, tell me the truth," he demanded.

I still treated it as a joke and said, "Do I *look* like a married woman?"

He said: "No, you don't," emphatically.

Then I said, languidly) "Oh, if this

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isn't a good joke, I can't imagine where you got such nonsense."

Some one came up and claimed me for a dance.

Later, Harry began somewhat in the same strain and I thought it safe to show my curiosity and question him.

I asked: "Where did you and Cecil get hold of such a rumor?"

He replied: "Cecil received a note the other night, saying you were a widow, that your husband had deserted you and was in Denver and that you had designs on him—Cecil."

I thought at once of my talk with Aunt and the open bedroom window and the lodging-house next to us.

"Mercy!" I said, "What sort of writing was it. I can't imagine who would play such a trick!"

"It was ill-spelled and looked as if an illiterate person had written it, the lodgers next door are mostly all miners, but then it might be in a disguised hand."

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I said, "Did you believe it, and what did Cecil say when he read it?"

"He was lying on the floor when I gave it to him, and when he read it, he just kicked up his heels and laughed, and tossed it over to me."

"Do you think he believes it?"

"No, of course not," he said, as if there was no doubt about the matter. I *do* hope there isn't. I *am* a wicked designing woman, and a woman with a past beside, but I love Cecil. I love Cecil, and he fairly hates widows. And there are so many here, and the dancing school is semi-public and so many attend who are questionable. I would confess that I have been married, but he would never come to see me again if I did. As for my past, all men have a past, though boys are becoming more moral since women have taken such licence, I believe. Men, as a rule, leave so much unconfessed, surely one woman may keep silent. Why should we women tell everything? Why deliberately wreck our hopes for a principle that

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brings no reward, is seldom appreciated! No, I am too weak. I am glad Cecil, for one, has nothing to tell, nothing that a pure sister might not hear, and yet at times I wish he had and then I could feel we are more equal. He is above me in that and all else. All too unequal; how *can* I win! Oh, dear, I am glad you are pure, and yet—if you were not—

Dear friend—yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

Was out to the Buffalo mine to see Mrs. Castro yesterday. There is a dusty road from town out there, about a mile from the bridge, at the edge of town. One comes first to the smelter and up above the big slag dump, where the molten mineral is poured from huge iron boilers, and rolls down the embankment, sending up a lurid glare and forming fantastic shapes, sometimes looking like a giant skeleton of fire. And at night the chimney stacks belch forth blue flames and showers of

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red sparks and balls fall, and all around are the dark outlines of the foothills and the buildings against the sky. One could imagine the bottomless pit of the underworld was right here. And up above on a ledge of rock is the Buffalo hotel, and on, up, great banks of reddish clay and red and gray rocks and grayish-green cactus and the Hoosier mine, an offspring of the Buffalo. I went to Pearl's room and she said at once before I sat down: "Let's go see the boys."

She led the way and I followed her down to a building near the smelter, used as an office. As we went in we saw Cecil working on some maps and charts. They were blue and had little bags, filled with something, to hold them down at the corners. I lifted one of the bags and Cecil made me put it down again. We poked our fingers and noses into everything and I didn't see any boys, only Cecil. And after a while he asked us to go on up the hill and wait for him and he would bring



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his kodak. I wore a navy blue tailor made suit, a red silk petticoat and a cherry colored velvet hat with six plumes. Pearl and I went up and sat down on a rock and presently Cecil joined us and we stumbled over rocks and climbed upon big boulders while Cecil took snap shots of us and then we could hardly get down again and he never offered a helping hand or assisted us at all, but just let us scramble down. And he walked about three or four yards away from us and kept shooting at tin cans and rocks and things. And whenever we got up on high places he let us just fall down again, and once I stood and called and made a fuss and he just stood and looked at me. Now *is* he polite! We watched the men come down the steep hill from the Hoosier and they looked like so many flies on a loaf of bread.

Mr. McNess drove up after me in the buggy, so I don't know if Cecil would have taken me home or not.

Yours,

IRENE.

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DEAR GRACE :—

I had dressed myself all in white durity, and was still doing my hair, when Cecil came. My room door opening off the parlor was half ajar. He came into the parlor and began drumming on the piano. I stepped to my door and told him I would be out in a minute. He drummed some more and then came to my door and stood watching me. I said: "Go away." He did not move an inch. I said, "I have rats in my hair and I don't want you to watch me do it up."

He said, "Pretend I am your brother. I know you wear a rat in your hair; so does Sis."

I replied, "The list is too long already. I do not care to add to it. I have too many brothers."

He said: "Take me for something *dearer* then."

I hesitated and said falteringly: "I don't know——"

He stepped into my room and inter-

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rupted me gently : "It is *time* you knew."

He took me in his arms, backed up against the door leading to the dining-room away from the open one and kissed my hair. I pushed him gently from me and said : "Now go away while I do my hair." He went back to the parlor and just as I had finished my hair Mrs. Arrano called—a lovely Spanish woman who holds such a magnetic influence over me. I know if I were a man I should love her, and I often wish I had her soft caressing voice and quiet, graceful manner.

She and Cecil began at once to talk of me and he assumed such a new proprietorship way I felt foolish, so I cannot remember what they said. But they talked about me in a bantering way, and she smiled and agreed to all he said in her soft voice and made soft eyes at me and some way it was as if we were engaged and I believe she thought so. After she took her leave,

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he said: "You don't care for the dance to-night, do you?"

I replied: "Not very much."

"Then suppose we take a walk," he suggested. As we went out, aunt called to me from the store to be careful and hold up my dress from the dust. We climbed over the Arizona hills and stumbled over stones and through sage brush and on down to the railroad track. It is about the only place one can walk to avoid stones and cactus and deep sand. We walked on until we came in sight of some Indian camps and their smoldering camp-fires.

Everything was very still and almost dark, but the beautiful moonlight became more and more coldly clear but not so clear as it generally is, and all around were the dim forms of the tents and the hill rose up opposite and a building or two in the distance, and on either side of us the track running up to Globe and down to San Carlos. We sat down on the embankment at the edge of the track and he resumed the

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conversation. It was his old theme, matrimony—put off for him, six years, at least.

He said: "Now there are the Castros'. He is infernally jealous; looks fierce if she ever talks to us boys at the dinner table. And she, well, she is extravagant; if he gives her some money she buys truck. She does not seem to have any idea about the value of money. So they quarrel and the whole boarding house laughs at them. Now I would hate to be married and get along like that. And they are getting so in debt, the other day she borrowed money from Dewey."

"Of course she is as innocent as a child; there is so much she does not know; she has always been at home and he is the only man her people ever let her go with. And instead of trying to teach her, he gets jealous and scolds her before every one, and creates a scene; I feel sorry for them both," I said.

Cecil replied: "I must tell you what

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happened the other night. She was sitting on the steps of the hotel veranda and Dewey was leaning over her in a manner I didn't like, and she was blushing at something he had said. When I got up to them I said: 'Dewey you had better go on up the hill,' and he never said a word, but went. I said: 'Mrs. Castro, pardon me; but the people in the hotel are making remarks about the way that fellow hangs around you and if I were you I would avoid him.' She said, 'Yes, whenever I am alone he is around talking to me, but what am I to do, how can I help it?' 'Well,' I said, 'if your husband hears anything *he'll help it*, so, for your sake I thought I would tell you.' She asked me to sit down. I told her I was on the way up to my room—you know it is in the library building opposite the hotel, almost, a little farther up. 'Your husband is on the way up,' I said and I left her. Dewey was on the veranda lighting a cigar as I came up. I said; 'Dewey, see here, the old women are talking about

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the way you hang around Mrs. Castro, and it isn't right; she doesn't know how it looks and you do.' He said: 'Confound your straight-laced notions, I wish you'd mind your own d——business.' I replied, 'You had better mind yours, or—if Castro thought your motives were—that is, that you were trying to carry on a flirtation with his wife he'd put a bullet through you—that's all,' and I walked away."

"And I thought *you* were flirting with her," I said, "She is so beautiful; any man could love her, and she is always talking about Mr. Whitmore and——"

He interrupted me: "I hope I have too much honor to pay more attention than courtesy demands, toward any married woman. No; when a woman is married I draw the line, no matter how beautiful."

"She seems to like you pretty well and——"

"There, don't say any more; it does not sound right. She is simply too

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innocent ; I'd rather a woman knew too much than not enough."

My face flushed as he closed with that remark, but then he didn't mean just that. I didn't feel like talking so he resumed the conversation as I kept silent.

"Now the smelter superintendent, Hayden, and his wife are like two children, always playing and laughing and teasing each other, one wonders what they find to have so much fun about. Married life—when like that, is all right. I would like to settle down but I don't like the scenery," he concluded irreverently.

"But you will not always remain here, in Arizona," I said

"I should hope *not*. But my position is uncertain, and don't you think a wife encumbers one? And then, I want to go to college a couple of years more; what do you think?" he said thoughtfully.

"Oh, you could send her home to her folks, if you couldn't do anything



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else while you went to the university or when you had change of position, or anything like that," I suggested.

"Well I wouldn't do that, I don't think," he said, with his head thrown back. "No, I'm not going to marry until I am thirty," he added.

I said: "A young man starting out with an uncertain position, ambitious, with achievements to attain, and of *your* age should not burden himself with a wife. The right kind of girl might help you, but another, like Mrs. Castro, for instance, would be a burden and interfere with your career. A sensible, economical girl would be an aid to you, but such a one, not older than yourself, would be difficult to find. On the whole you are right not to marry too young."

My statements and advice were weak, because I wanted to argue the other way. I was afraid he would detect the personal note in my voice, and then too I wanted to be quite fair. But all my vocabulary protested to say—that, after

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all, nothing in the world counts but love. Naught else is worth the living. Ambition and wealth and great achievement and position pale into insignificance compared with the ideal life of two souls mated. And before either one is satiated with worldly desires gratified and love frittered away, and impure knowledge of all the soot and sully and hurt this old world belches forth, before one is blasé with it all. Youth and purity and love and nature, NOTHING equals that. Ignorant of the world's degeneracy, and alive only in their love for each other and their maintenance, thinking the world a huge play-ground for them to play in, to build up the castles of their imagination, to fly the kites of their hopes and aspirations, to nurse the live doll that looks with eyes like their own into their faces, only grown-up children, and these but the toys of their ambitions with which to plan and build and soar upward in their flights of fancy, thinking the rest of the world looks on in envy and

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wonder—oh, the importance, the joy of it! And the world neither heeds nor cares. Ah, so much better than struggling alone, even at the early age of twenty-two. Begin the home and all its surroundings early. Grow up young with your children. Plan and work and bear joy and disappointment together. And let it all be a grand poem to think about in your old age—a poem of life rightly lived and born together.

This is what I thought and would like to have said, but all the time I would have been pleading my own cause and I couldn't do that, and anyway I am not the right woman for him, as the world looks at these things. If our positions were reversed it would be all right though. It is hard to have to be woman. Yet no one could help him and be so interested in the consummation of his plans as I. I at least would not be a burden.

The stars came out one by one and the new rails glistened along the track

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in the soft blue moonlight, the Indian camp fires made a dull-red glow in the shadow, the air was warm and perfume laden from a nursery nearby, a gentle breeze stirred the leaves of a Yucca—or Spanish dagger, growing near. Our eyes glowed into each other's and there was the same look in his eyes I have seen twice before, and it is the look I have seen in men's eyes when they said they loved me—the musician and the French teacher and others. And I laughed at them, but now it filled me with a sort of awe. We were alone, out there on the desert of Arizona. An old Indian stalked up the track, looked at us for fully two minutes, laughed softly to himself, muttered, "Sisogi," (meaning sweetheart or something like that) and passed on to his wigwam, his squaw and his still smouldering camp-fire.

Cecil broke the silence apropos of nothing. He said: "No, I don't like the scenery, do you, Irene?"

"Not in the day-time, but now——"

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His hand was holding the bottom of my skirt. I pulled the dress away. He said: "I was just holding it up from the dirt. One couldn't settle down *here* to live, could you?" he continued.

"No—not for always—for a while, yes."

"It isn't life out here, is it? only existence."

He was holding my hand and I was playing with his fingers, a cow ambled by and went down into a ravine.

"No, it isn't life," I said listlessly, yet to me it is the sweetest life I have ever known, I thought.

We were quiet for a long time and then he said, gently, as if he were reading my thoughts, and it seemed to me he must feel the love that radiated from my being—"Tell me," he said, persuasively, "Well—why don't you tell me?"

"Tell you what?" I whispered.

"You know," he said, softly, leaning toward me.

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"You are trying to make me say something, make some admissions, what is it you want me to say?"

He answered irreverently: "Well if you won't commit yourself, *I* won't."

I would like to have thrown myself in his arms and told him all there was in my heart. How a desert would be a Paradise if with him, if he were there with me. But I was not bold as I am sometimes; a restraint held me in check because I felt so deeply, the hour seemed too holy for speech. I did not wish to break in upon it with mere words.

Cecil seemed to change again, and we arose and wended our way up the track in silence and I felt that I had once more almost gained heaven, and lost it. Almost reluctantly I walked toward home. We stopped in the little patch of green yard my aunt has coaxed to grow, and standing beneath the tree in front of the porch I picked a Spanish named blossom from a bush and put it in the lapel of his coat.



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"What are you decorating me for? I'm not a grave," he said.

A sob came up into my throat, I choked it back and answered in a low voice half to myself, "Yes, you are,—the grave of my buried hopes."

He gave an uneasy laugh: "How silly, why talk so!" kissed me on the brow reverently and murmured "Darling," so low, I think, even now, my ears must have deceived me, held my hand an instant and was gone! And the earth was all around me as before.

Your loving

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

Was sitting on the veranda with Mr. McNess, and we were smoking cigarettes, when I heard the gate click and saw it was Cecil coming up the track. I tried to throw my cigarette through the vines, and it fell back on the veranda floor while I put the box in my shirt front. I was so afraid Cecil saw. Mr. McNess left as soon as they had ex-

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changed a few words—he always gives way—just as he takes me everywhere if there is anything to pay, and driving Sundays. Cecil never spends money on me, but then I know he is saving money to pay for his course at Stanford and he has already paid his father one thousand dollars for his education. He says his college course shall not cost his father one dollar. Isn't he fine! I admire him—love him—for all those things. A man is foolish to spend money on a girl unless he is engaged to her, if he cannot really afford it. Girls are not won that way—at least not girls of good sense.

As we sat there in a couple of rocking chairs, he put his hand on my lap, and pretty soon he said: "You ought to climb around the hills more. See how solid *my flesh* is." And he put my hand on his leg, and it was as hard as rock, and then he bared his arms and made me feel them and they were so hard. I don't wonder he is proud of them. He was so matter-of-fact about



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it. Harry says—when Cecil is stripped his form is superb; there is a big room at the mine where they take a shower bath.

I wish we were at the beach and then I could see his form too. I told Cecil he was a flirt, and he said: "I have never flirted with you, have I?" And he said it as if he were offended, and I was afraid to stick to the assertion.

Yet, sometimes, I think maybe he *is* flirting with me—do you?

Your loving

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

Every afternoon, the "foreman" comes to my aunt's after he comes off shift. His shack is up the hill, back of our house. Aunt makes me go in the parlor and entertain him, because she has to attend to the store, and sometimes it is near dinner time, five o'clock, such a funny hour for dinner, but we breakfast at ten; and his jokes are so coarse. He is a Cornishman; they call

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them "Cousin Jacks" here—there are a great many English, Mexicans, Chinese and Indians in Globe. The "foreman" tells me so much about the singers, and I don't think that is nice conversation for polite society, do you? And aunt too, likes to talk about the people "below the line." She has raffled off jewelry for them when they were sick and destitute and buried them when they died, or, more often, committed suicide. And she likes to tell about it, in the most dramatic way. I often wonder, when Cecil is present, what he thinks. His home must be so different, and the conversations he hears there, so proper and elevating. I wonder what he thinks of the free and easy life out here and the matter-of-fact way anything and everything is discussed. Aunt nurses the miners too. She nursed the "foreman" through an illness, and that is why she thinks so much of him, and why he is always around as if this was his home. And I believe she has helped bury every one

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who ever died in Globe, in the sixteen years she has been here. When I have callers in the evening, the "foreman" hangs around in the back yard, and when aunt goes out to hang the milk-pail on a nail, as she does every night about ten o'clock, and she most always stays so long—it must be awful hard to hang up—I suppose because aunt is so short and fat—well, anyway, she finds him out there, and, the next day, she always tells about seeing John, as she calls him, and how mad he was because I had a lot of dudes in the house and he could not come in, and aunt seems mad at me and I can't help it. He could come in too. And he asks her if she thinks I would marry him, and she tells him to ask me himself. But she knows I would not have him if he was worth a million, and I think she ought to tell him the truth. And I should think he could tell by my actions, but men are so dense. She used to make engagements with him for me to church and places. He does not attend dances.

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He did once. There were no nice boys there that night and I didn't dance much, and I was tired and wanted to go home, and aunt wouldn't go, so John took me home, and we had not any more than reached the house when she came and she was furious and said such mean things to me that I cried and said I would go back East the next day. And I went to bed and John had gone out the back door and after a while aunt came in my room with a couple of whisky toddies with lots of sugar and lemon in them. She was sorry and we sort of made up. And then she went out to hang up the milk-pail and was gone so long I fell asleep. In the morning, I didn't start back, because I didn't have enough money.

She does not try to make any more engagements with him for me; because he has found out she does not consult me about them and he will not go any more, not even to church. The last time, I had an engagement with some one to spend the evening at Mrs.

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other respect and that a doctor or lawyer knew nothing outside of their professions. Which was all very absurd and made me quite excited.

But as I began to write, the boys were at the house and I proposed a game of whist and Cecil helped me clear off the table, and I drew the cloth along so as to wipe up any possible dust and Cecil "caught on" and laughed at me. He always sees everything.

We had quite a merry game. Harry and I played against Cecil and Mr. Norton, and after a while I thought of the cake and Bordeaux in the house, and aunt didn't come, so I brought it in anyway. I knew it was not proper and I made an apology and we drank the wine and ate the cake and Harry said: "Cecil, she can make cake all right," and he winked and everyone laughed.

And then they sang Latin college songs and I could not understand a word, only it sounded nice. They sang songs in Latin all the evening and Harry played some on the piano Cecil and I

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sat on the divan and he played with a long iridescent chain I wore around my neck and he whispered that I looked nice, though I had on only a shirt-waist and black skirt. And the boys talked about their "Frat," only Harry, he, like me, could not join in on that, and I did so wish I had gone to college and belonged to an "Alti Delphi Phi" or a "Sigma Sigma" or something like that.

But it *was* all Greek to me.

Anyway they had a very good time and so did I, but I am sorry that I served the wine. I'm afraid that was not good form.

Your loving

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

I have ceased to care that I have not made a musician or an author of myself. My disappointments are forgotten. I know all the old longings to "do something" will return some time, but just now I am content to love. There is no

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room for anything else, and I really believe he loves me. His actions are certainly those of a lover, yet he still says the things that make the little chills. I have always had an indefinite yearning. I thought it was my narrow surroundings, and I crawled out of that; you know how. Then I longed for artistic distinction; I wanted to do something as an actress, author, artist or vocalist, but my people had objected to the first. I waited, until I became too old to begin the first and last, and I lost my voice; I suppose my all-embracing desire for fame was inconsistent, and unworthy a person of any depth of character. And the struggle being unequal, in my impatience I grew reckless, at times desperate, and so—I fell. And the yearning was more intense than before, and I still felt imprisoned, and beat my wings against the bars fate had built around me, as a bird beating its wings against the bars of a cage in its frantic desire to escape. There are some people like the

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birds born in a cage, who do not fret and bruise themselves in their rebellion, but are content, but I was like the captive bird of the forest. And I knew not if it was the desire for fame, the yearning for love, or a lost vocation, and not until now have I learned a little of peace, and ceased to struggle.

And I care neither for attainment, distinction, the luxuries of life, or anything else, only, to have him, and live anywhere, anyhow,—here in the desert of Arizona, in a tent, wash and cook and keep house for him. I could endure all the things I have hated, if I could but have him. He has changed my ideas, my desires, everything. When a woman loves a man, how he can change her whole life and character! My whole being is filled with love—there is no room for aught else; only love,—that is all.

Your loving

IRENE.



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DEAR GRACE,—

Something happened last night I would I could undo.

I had just had a bath, and the violet toilet water I use made me feel so fresh and sweet, and I had sprinkled Talcum powder nearly all over me, and feeling like a nice clean baby, I was just about to jump into bed when aunt called me.

Early in the evening Cecil had called to tell me his brother was in town, and he said he could not stay long, had just run in for a moment, and must join his brother and a party of men for dinner. And he mentioned they would have champagne wine. I asked him to bring his brother over—I would like to meet him. But he said his brother would never go any place—he could not induce him to call on a girl. My cheeks went pale and then red ; I knew it was a prevarication. I thought : “Cecil is ashamed to have his brother meet me ; perhaps I do not compare with the California girls. And I have been in Globe so long I begin to feel quite de-

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generated, and have lost my style. I am like a chameleon—taking on the color of my surroundings.”

Well, it was about ten o'clock; we usually remain up until twelve and quite often until one o'clock. Aunt said: “It is Cecil,” and she told him I would be out in a minute. So, putting on a loose gown over my night robe and my feet into slippers, I went out. As I stepped out the door on to the porch I said: “Why, Cecil! Isn't it pretty late for a call?” He replied, “I don't think so; you are usually up a great deal later than this every night, I didn't expect to find you had retired or I wouldn't have rapped; accept my apology.”

However, he seated himself in a chair and I sat down beside him. He put his arm around me at once and I could detect the odor of wine on his breath. His caress against my thinly clad form sent a thrill all through me. I began to talk at once. I told him about a baby I had seen dying that day whose parents

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had separated, each going to some other. Mr. More had found his wife out walking with Dewey about twelve one night and though Mr. More himself had been seen talking to a certain "hired girl" over a neighbor's gate night after night until a very late hour, he upbraided his wife and left her at once. Ever since, he has gone around quite openly with the "hired girl," and the baby is so sweet and is dying with hardly a cry on its lips.

Any other time, Cecil would have expressed the same opinions and sympathy that I felt; but this evening he did not pay much attention to what I was saying, and his caress became more ardent. Cecil had never acted so before, even when I almost wished it, nay, *did* wish it. It was almost dark on the porch, the moonlight sifted through the vines and leaves in patches around us. I felt my senses reeling and so I arose and Cecil did too and went down a couple of steps and turned to bid me good night. This brought him on



“—AND KISSED ME FULL ON THE LIPS—”



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more of a level with me. Suddenly, he clasped me to him and placing both arms around my limbs, lifted me as if I were a child and kissed me full on the lips with a kiss of desire. My head became confused and in an ecstasy my feverish lips clung to his in a devouring insatiable kiss. All the pent-up longing of weeks, all the hard self-control, was let loose in that reckless *first kiss*, such as no innocent girl ever bestowed. For one wild, sweet moment I abandoned myself. And then his hands slipped along the curves of my form as he let me down. I said: "Go, you said they were waiting for you!"

He answered, oh, so recklessly: "Let them wait, what do I care?"

He held both my hands so tightly it hurt, as he looked me straight in the eyes, his own glowing: "Must I?" he whispered. I said: "Yes." He released me suddenly and strode down the path. Feeling exhausted I crept up the steps and into the house, and as the door closed behind me I knew a door had

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likewise closed on my happiness. He will never believe me innocent again.

I fear my hopes are ruined. I am so sorry and it was so sweet.

Yours respectfully,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

Mrs. Castro came in to me to-day and after I greeted her at the door, she made a "bee line" for my room to powder her nose. She always does. And she hardly ever puts any on the rest of her face; just her nose. And it is such a delicate, pretty nose, with just the least suspicion of a tilt. I don't see why she has such a grudge against it. And the paint and eyebrow pencils and things I always have, and really very seldom use, have such an interest for her, as if she never saw any before! She flopped down in a chair, after she had made her nose as white as chalk and said: "Just think of the trouble that horrid Dewey has made, and me just letting him talk and talk to me every day, and

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you know in the pantry that time! Oh! I was scared when I heard about him separating that man and his wife! Suppose it had been me and Harold!" she said in a stage whisper.

"Of course it couldn't have been you," I assured her, "you wouldn't have walked out late with him, or anything like that."

"Oh I don't know, he has the most winning voice, so soft and kind of caressing, and his eyes! and one night at the dance we danced together an awful lot and we were seated at a table having some ice-cream, and having lots of fun and Harold marched in, yes, just *marched* right up and made me go right straight home, and he never spoke to Mr. Dewey at all, and he told me not to, ever again, and he just scolded all the way home."

"Well," I said, "of course you know it is not nice, not good form, to dance with one man all evening, and that night, I remember, he never left your side, and I suppose Harold was looking



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in the window or door, with all the Indians and the boys that are always there watching the dance. It looks queer, doesn't it, when we are in nice delicate evening dresses and some of the boys in full dress suits and everything quite like a city hop, to look up and see those grinning Indian faces, black-eyed squaws and dirty-faced boys and always some men who are not dressed or do not care to come in, it sometimes gives me the shivers; but the hall is on the ground floor and it is too warm to close the windows, I suppose even they could see he was flirting with you."

"Flirting? Oh! no, we never flirted, you wouldn't call that flirting would you? I am sure Mr. Whitmore and I talk a whole lot up at the hotel and Harold doesn't care if he walks home from a dance with me, or anything, and that's just the same," she said, on the defensive.

Just the same, I thought, only a different man, and what a difference

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that makes ! These innocent women can do more mischief though and cause a husband more anxiety than any number of less innocent but more discreet women could. And some wives are so—well, sort of a “enfant terrible” type. Anyway, she is, she does such things, and says such things ! I could not begin to tell you ; no wonder half the boys in town are wild over her.

“ My dear, that is what the world calls flirting—for a married woman to receive noticeable attentions from any man.”

“ I didn’t know that ; don’t *you* flirt ? ”

“ I am not—I am a girl—men may pay me attention without censure, but you, my dear, must be careful how you permit them to look at and talk to you.”

In the evening Mr. Castro and Cecil and Harry came and we all sat on the porch, and after a while Mrs. Allen came over ; she most always does if there is more than one boy at the house.

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We all joked and laughed a great deal—Mrs. Allen is very witty. The jokes were on me. We were in a play together and she was the Irish maid and I was leading lady, and in the first act I was a coquette and in the second, a dutiful daughter who left home and luxury and a lover to go with a tramp father, an escaped convict who turned up. My cousin who loved me and whom I detested, recognized him and persuaded him to make me leave my happy home. The part of the convict was played by the man who came to town to get up the "show" for the consideration of half the net receipts. In the third act. I was poor, unhappy and alone, father having gone out after a drink regardless of much pleading and many tears on my part. The cousin suddenly appears in true stage-villain fashion and offers me wealth and happiness and of course I do not know that he is instrumental in keeping the knowledge of my whereabouts from my adopted parents and my lover. And he pleads and promises,

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and this is my *grand* scene. I tower up in my scorn (I am only five feet one), and in tragic tones I say : "I would rather die in poverty, with the memory of the man I love, than live in the splendor you offer, to *DESPISE* myself!" Some way, I didn't think I got all the applause I deserved. But then, great scenes always meet with impressive silence. Father rushes in, as I am pointing my cousin out, and hot words ensue between them, because father repents his share and from the looks of things isn't getting much coin for it, I guess. And then tramp-father grabs—what the book says is a crowbar—but this was an axe, and he grabs the sharp edge and sprinkles blood all over the stage and I am supposed to faint, and I do, I always do at the sight of blood.

However I recovered enough to be found by my love, Jack, in the fourth act, am restored to my wealthy home and Jack's love and everything is lovely, and after a while the tramp comes back a wealthy mine owner and he has grown

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a beard and a polished manner all in the same incredibly short time. He had grown a mustache in the second act, after his escape from prison. The name of the play was: "The Noble Outcast," or "Jerry the Tramp." The *Globe* paper was very kind, aside from roasting Jerry, who used the, one-time, prerogative of leading man and star and persistently kept the center of stage regardless of the scene or the way we had rehearsed. The paper said we did as well as could be expected with the short time the play was gotten up in, and that the make up was faulty in more ways than one. And how they scored Jerry!

And the boys didn't look at me through soda-pop bottles or suck lemons and all that, as they said they would, but they did put on evening suits and all sit in a row, about ten of them, and Cecil among them. A large, fleshy woman took the rôle of my mother, and the stage is small and the boys say when she was on, I was hid from view.

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And Mr. Allen, who is taller than Cecil, played the part of my cousin and they say my 'scorn scene' reminded them of a black and tan puppy barking at a big mastiff.

So I guess I would have failed as an actress and my folks were right not to let me be one. But aunt was very proud of me because I didn't forget a line. And if I didn't get showered with flowers it is because there are none in Globe and Los Angeles is so far away. This is what the boys were teasing me about as we sat on the veranda; they have been doing it for a week. I did not tell you before, because it was not more of a success. The 'star' gave me his card and intimated I would be proud of having had the honor to play with him, some day. I hope so, but I am doubtful. Aunt made some claret lemonade and invited us into the dining-room.

Cecil lingered behind and he said: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself after last night?"



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I said : " Yes, but if I hadn't had the wrapper on, if I had been clothed in my right mind—I mean my right clothes—it never would have happened."

" And if I hadn't drank so much champagne," he added. " You must never do that again."

" And you must not drink champagne again, nor call after we have retired."

" The blame is all mine, Irene, forgive me. I *was* surprised at you though!"

Then some one came out and after a while Mr. Castro got me into a corner and said to me : " I wish you would tell my wife things. You are not married but some way you seem to know more about things than Pearl. She hasn't the least idea how things look. She was always that way, but I thought after we were married it would come to her naturally. But she still acts just like a girl. And she never went anywhere much at home, and here she seems to have so much attention and flattery, and I don't know what to do.

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She becomes angry when I scold her or feels hurt, and I hate to; I want her to have a good time. You and she are such friends, won't you tell her when things do not look well?"

I didn't have a chance to answer much, but I promised him I would talk to her and tell her what not to do.

I thought—"Satan reproving sinners." And I wished that I had all her innocence even if she did "do things" that didn't look well. No one here seems to appreciate her but me, and I—I envy her!

Every one went home quite early, after Harry played and wound up with his old favorite Cavalier Rusticana. Cecil lingered just a moment behind the others and held my hand in his while he looked long into my eyes and he just said: "Be a good girl. Good-night," And he didn't offer to kiss me again.

Your loving

IRENE.

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DEAR GRACE :—

This morning early, before breakfast Mr. McNess called, with a halter in his hand and said he was going up the hill to take some poor Mexican's broncho for debt. He asked me if I wanted to go and have an early morning walk. I said yes. So I went, and helped him catch the pony. On the way up he looked at my face closely and said : "You don't use paint."

I asked : "Who said I did?"

"Oh, no one, only Mrs. Castro was in the store. I sold her some shoes and she had her face painted and some black stuff on her eyelids and she looked like—looked—well I can't tell you just what she did look like. I told her she spoiled her own natural beauty and asked her where she got all that stuff. And she said : 'Oh, Irene has lots of it.'"

Now whenever I look nice the boys will think I am all made up and Cecil will too, for of course she will tell him. He is a little put out at something she said though. He showed her that girl

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in the oval gold frame. She was in his room, and she said: "Oh! Isn't she sweet, and what a lovely neck and shoulders, they look good enough to bite!"

And he said it sounded coarse and he wondered if her husband talked that way to her, and that she had "queered" herself with him.

So you see how particular he is.

Mr. McNess and I came down the street leading the horse and we did look too funny, but there were not many people up. We met some Mexicans and they stopped Mr. McNess and he told me to walk on slowly. And I was afraid he was going to have trouble, but he joined me again and when we reached the house I asked him in to breakfast, but he declined.

Mrs. Arrano and my cousin's wife are coming, so must close.

Good-by,

IRENE.

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DEAR GRACE,—

I am afraid it is all ended and I am heartily ashamed of myself. When a girl has been bad she cannot be good again, all at once. I think as a rule she tries and fails, and fails, and finally gives up, to float farther down the on-rushing, relentless stream of the fallen, which forever grows larger and more turbulent. And, perhaps, when she starts, she isn't so very bad, only a little, and does not mean to go far, just to idly drift a little way, tempted by curiosity, love, ease and fine clothes. Sometimes, in desperation, it is to maintain others dependent upon her, just from necessity, and she means to stop after a while, but the eddies and whirlpools of vanity and passion and indolence catch her, and she flounders helplessly in the mighty rapids of the unfortunates.

I suppose the beautiful clothes—perhaps, are, after all, women's greatest temptation—and the good things to eat, and the wine and pretended lovers,

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is very nice at first, and it is all so covered by the luxuries of life, that she does not see that it is all glitter and tinsel and make-believe. And if she has been poor and not very intellectual or ambitious she does not feel the disappointment and regret for a long, long time, and, if she does, she has not the self-will to begin again, and by hard labor win back something of what she has lost. The other life unfits one so for labor; few have the strength to begin their own redemption.

But some day they are sure to realize that it isn't real at all, that fine clothes and jewels and luxurious surroundings do not make real ladies, and that they are, perhaps, growing old and that no one really loves them. And only the extremely beautiful or brilliant and clever ones attain such a degree of apparent wealth, which is after all only theirs for a day, a week. The thousands make but enough to keep their poor lost souls and bodies together and cover their nakedness, and they walk the

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streets, night after night, plying a trade that is as hard and exacting as any—selling looks and health and youth—for what?

And some day, they see some nice little wife, not very richly dressed, but with a lovely child and a husband who *looks* at her as no man ever looked at the fallen one. Suddenly the woman's eyes are opened and she sees things in a new light, sees the riches that money cannot buy, the fullness of a woman's birthright, and knows at last all she has lost. The next day the paper says, "'Copper Head Annie,' or something like that, committed suicide last night."

"One more unfortunate,  
Rashly importunate,  
Gone to her death."

That is all.

Of course they do not all see, some never see. Many drink so much they are too blunted, but they are unhappy just the same. Did you ever happen to see one intoxicated and stop a mo-

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ment in pity? Or visit one very ill? Did you ever hear them at such a time say "mother" or talk of home? If you did, you would learn something of the remorse and horror they are suffering and your heart would ache.

So after last night, I thought how awful it would have been if ever *I* had drifted down like that, and I know the temptations I have escaped. And the descent is so gradual, so unconscious.

Perhaps you are led away from the path through love, one of those moments like last night, when it is hard to say just which one is to blame—youth tempted beyond control in an opportune moment that should have been avoided, and which by proper chaperonage always is avoided, both the evil that might be, and the appearance of evil, made impossible.

After one false step, recklessness and despair lead the way still farther, and then if you are not one reared in ease, the gay life leads on—and then where are you—what is the end? If only



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after the first step, when the soul and conscience are shocked, and one pauses a second, one would *stop*, pull back with a firm, tight rein on the impulses and emotions and discouragement, and try to repair the wrong, in time the blemish would hardly be visible, and virtue might resume her throne once more.

Clothes never tempted me—nor flattery. I fell through ambition and impatience. The narrow surroundings which held me back, the lack of business ability to win my laurels through hard work and study, the lack of physical strength to do both. Money and the *leisure* to study. It came my way in a pleasing guise—the rôle of benevolence and fatherly protection—gratitude did the rest. Satan will find a way, and his ways and disguises are legion.

But about last night.

Early in the evening Cecil and Harry called, and after a while Mrs. Allen came, and we talked a great deal of nonsense, and Harry played and Mrs.

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Allen recited verses in dialect, and we had begun to have such a nice time, when the boys said they would have to go. The superintendent owed them a bet, and they had an engagement to meet him and relieve him of the indebtedness. They promised not to drink too much wine, and return as soon as they could. In the meantime I went home with Mrs. Allen. We crawled through the hole in the fence that we had made for our own convenience, at the end of the porch, where the fence was along the yard. Close to the end of our porch her windows open on to our front "lawn," if I may call it that. We had a perfectly Bohemian lunch. Sardine sandwiches sprinkled with chopped onions, and beer.

It was not long before we heard the boys return and enter the house, and we hurried over through the hole in the fence. After greeting them as if we had not seen them about half an hour ago, I hurried out to the kitchen for some coffee to sweeten my breath. Not

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satisfied with the coffee, I took quite a swallow of pure absinthe, some I had the time of the "slurs," to brace up my nerves, and I think I did owe any credit I may have deserved to that. Cecil followed me, and as I came from the kitchen into the dimly lighted dining room I ran against him, and he caught me and pressed me to him, and I—well, I returned the pressure in a way anything but modest. Then I broke loose, and returned to the parlor, where I found Mrs. Allen and Harry having a scuffle over something, I do not know what.

Later on, somehow, found us all in my room, and I was actually seated on Cecil's lap. Mrs. Allen and Harry sat on the edge of my little white bed, smoking cigarettes. Cecil was fumbling with my skirts, and I said: "Why, Cecil!" And he said: "I knew you would come to it. I say, Harry, did you hear her call me Cecil?"

And then aunt came in, and my ! she did look funny, and Cecil and I had

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reasons to feel afraid, and then my muddled head realized that we were acting like anything but ladies and gentlemen, and I got up and led the way out to the porch. Aunt came and shut the door and went to bed disgusted, I am sure. Mrs. Allen and Harry took the steps, and Cecil and I retired to the remotest corner. We seated ourselves in two rocking chairs, and he pulled me over to him, and I laid my head on his lap, almost, and he began to caress me, and the beer and absinthe was in my head, and I completely abandoned myself. He took liberties no nice girl ever allowed and retained her honor. My face grows red to-day as I remember. Either honor, or something, stayed the impulse which prompted Cecil from breaking all bounds.

He said, so caressingly, "You love it—to be kissed, don't you?"

"I love *you*," I answered, passionately.

"You must not love me *too well*,

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little girl, because I don't love *you*, Irene. I have never loved any one," he said, tenderly, half regretfully. And he kissed me again long and warmly.

"But why don't you, why *can't* you," I pleaded.

"I wish I could, but I can't. I have never loved any girl like that. Sometimes I am afraid I never will, so you see, Irene, you must not love me."

"And you are going away in two or three months, and I may never see you again, never. Sometimes I think if I could only have you *now*. What does it matter? Let me have you while I can. I don't care! I don't care for anything! Let me love you for a little while," I said, growing reckless, as I realized he was going to pass out of my life. His love for a time would be better than never at all. To have him wholly mine three months! An unawakened boy! perhaps, whom I might gain an influence over after all, through his emotions, that might not die so quick.

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*Anything* rather than never be anything to him.

"There, don't talk like that, you must care, if you don't who will? You would regret it afterward, you must respect yourself or no one else will."

My palpitating heart was becoming less passionate, but oh, so heavy.

Cecil held me in his arms but he had ceased to caress me with his hands, or kiss me.

"Oh, if you only could care for me, a little, I don't see how you can be so——"

"I have liked you better than any girl I ever knew. Do you think I would have come to see you so often if I hadn't?" he said earnestly.

I resumed an upright position, and Harry called, "Are you ready to go home, Cecil?"

"Not just yet," he answered.

The doctor was heard calling his wife through the open window of his office, which opened on the yard, near the

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gate. She started up at once and crawled through the hole in the fence.

I said : " I guess it is awful late, and it is getting cold."

Cecil got up and Harry had already started to the gate. As we reached the steps Cecil bent low over my hand and kissed it, like a knight in Colonial days. And the kiss burned my hand, because the mock homage seemed an insult. What would I not have given to have had him mean that deep respect and reverence ?

How weak I have been !

Must the young men preserve the chastity of the coming generations ? Are women growing morally weaker ? Will the time come when young men are virtuous and women are—what ? If I cannot have his love, I should have kept his respect and that is gone ; once gone does it ever return ?

Yours penitently,

IRENE.

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DEAR GRACE,—

I have spent restless days and sleepless nights and it has been over a week since Cecil came. And he has been coming three and four times a week these warm June evenings. I saw Harry, and he said : “ You have queered yourself with Cecil ; what did I tell you all along ? ”

And when I asked him if Cecil said anything about me, He said : “ Nothing, only he made some pointed remarks the last night we were here together, on the way home.” He would not tell me any more. Sometimes I wonder if Harry *is* my friend, I have always confided in him so much.

Since I began this letter I have seen him. We were on Mrs. Allen’s porch, Mr. McNess and I. I was looking listlessly down the street when I saw some boys standing in a group on the walk. It made me so fidgety I could not talk, because I thought I saw Cecil in the crowd. It was Sunday and the store was closed, but I pretended that



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I wanted something and asked Mr. McNess to go down to the store with me.

As we came near the boys, Cecil, whose back was turned took off his cap and run his fingers through his hair. Just then we passed by and the others lifted their hats to me, I didn't know whether Cecil had raised his cap because he saw me approaching or whether he had given me a direct "cut," though of course no gentleman ever cuts a lady.

My limbs trembled so I could scarcely walk, and when we reached the store I did not remember what I had come for and I was so weak I had to sit down and Mr. McNess said: "You are awfully pale, Irene; are you ill? I will get you some wine." He brought me a glass of wine and my fingers shook and I spilled it all over my gloves. Mr. McNess looked at me with grave concern and I said: "It is nothing, I sometimes have a faint spell." On our return up street we took a path higher up and the boys were below the hill

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and I did not look as we passed above them.

I was so disagreeable when we got home that Mr. McNess (poor, devoted,) took an early departure and said he would come when I was feeling better.

When the band began their usual Sunday night concert, about a block from our house, I went out alone and stood on the corner in the crowd. As much alone as if there had been no crowd. Every one in Globe goes out to hear the band just before church and some remain all evening and do not attend church at all. And chairs are brought out and the women sit down and the men stand around and talk to them and the children play in the street. I did not recognize any one, did not look at them and the tears were very near my eyes when Cecil came up, unobserved by me, and spoke. I felt my whole face tremble; I know I looked tragic and his first words were spoken suddenly to see the effect of the shock,

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I know. "I am going away to-morrow."

The earth and all the people whirled around in a giddy revolution.

I tried to act as if I didn't care, and said coldly: "Is that so? Am sorry our little picnic for the fourth of July will be spoiled; but then I shall have time to accept some one of the other invitations I have received. Why are you going so much sooner than you expected?"

"The picnic will not be spoiled by my absence; some one can fill my place, though I am sorry to break the engagement with you for that day. I am going because the superintendent wants me to take my vacation now instead of later, and so I am going at once," he said.

"Of course it is nice that you can go nearly three months sooner than you anticipated, and you are fortunate to escape this awful Arizona heat," I said indifferently as I could.

While we were talking it began to

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rain, and we hastened to the house. We sat down on the porch but it rained so hard and the wind blew so that we went in, and we found the parlor deserted.

I assumed all the dignity I could command. He noticed it at once and said: "My! what an air you have to-night! It becomes you, I rather like it."

"It is immaterial whether you like my manner or not, since you would not speak to me on the street this evening," I replied, drawing myself up, though I was ready to cry.

"Wouldn't speak to you? It was *you* who didn't speak to me and I hesitated about coming to you when I saw you standing alone out there, after that," he said with some spirit.

"Oh, well, I know I have lost your respect, but I didn't think you would turn your back toward me, before all the boys too," I said.

"My dear Irene, you are certainly mistaken. I did not see you until you

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were almost by, and I beg your pardon if I did not salute you, but I did."

"I certainly did not see you show any sign that I was passing."

"How nice you look in that dress! Is that the one you had on this evening when you came down the street with Mr. McNess?" he said, changing the subject. I answered that it was, and he said: "I thought your dress looked rather loud, then, but it is very pretty when one is close to it."

My dress was thin material over yellow silk and trimmed in black ruching and my hat was of yellow chiffon and black ribbon velvet and I don't think it is very gay.

I showed him the proofs of my new pictures, taken in my pink evening dress, but the work is cheap—some traveling photographer. He made me promise I would send him one and he would send me his. Something was bothering me and I said: "I deserve all the hard things you must think of me, and I am not surprised you didn't care

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to come any more and stayed away a whole week."

"Oh, it wasn't that. The smelter superintendent went away for a few days and I was given his work to do and then I was studying nights, so I couldn't come up, very well," he explained.

"Are you sure that was the reason, Cecil?"

"Absolutely sure, why?"

"I came very near writing you a note and telling you something I have wanted to tell you before, for a long time," I faltered, and began to feel uncertain whether to tell him or not. It would not make any difference now, since he was going away, and it might extenuate my show of weakness and it might remove some other opinions he might have.

"Yes? and what is it?" he asked.

"I am afraid I can't tell you now."

"Why not? If you were going to write it, why not tell me," he pleaded.

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"Oh I can't!" I said, in confusion.

He came and sat on the corner of the divan near my chair and coaxed. But I blushed and stammered and made attempts and failed and somehow could not tell him—not in the bright light anyway.

"I know, it is about your name," he said.

One evening I had a letter from a very old friend, an actress, and the envelope contained my adopted name and my own name, which I took, when mamma procured her divorce and changed hers. And Cecil saw the envelope and he was curious and looked queer at me when I explained the two names to him and Harry said, in jest, "That's her married name."

And Cecil looked at me and said, "I know more than you imagine," and I hastened to change the subject. That was a long time ago.

So Cecil insisted: "Am I not right?" I said: "Yes," and hesitated.

"Well?" he insisted, looking straight

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at me with one of his piercing looks, so I couldn't confess.

"I—I *am* married!" I blurted out.

He said quite calmly: "I have known it all the time. Why didn't you tell me?"

"You said you detested widows."

"I would have thought more of you if you had told me before," he said gently as he looked at me so—so kind, but pained.

"I am sorry, Cecil; but you would have stayed away if you had known."

"I'd rather you had told me. Are you not going to change your name?"

I didn't explain that I had a divorce and that I never had used the name anyway, and what difference whether I was married or divorced? I don't know why, but I didn't explain. But I may when I see him again.

He said, "It is too bad! Tell me how it all happened, will you?"

Then I told him briefly how my husband had deserted me after six weeks of married life. How he went



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away with another woman and I never heard a word from him and it is six years ago. I may have said some more, but I did not go into detail.

When I had finished he said : "I am very sorry, Irene."

He arose and walked to the door and seemed agitated and I followed him, and he leaned up against the door and took me in his arms, and a sort of fear came over me. I don't know just why ; but I wanted to get away and I reached for the door and opened it and we both went out and sat down on the porch and the rain was still falling with a soft patter, and the wind had ceased.

As he took my hand and held it in his, he said in a gently reproving tone : "I could have done anything I wanted to with you the other night."

I could make no answer, but bowed my head and lifted his fingers one after the other.

"When you drink toddies, or anything, you cannot control yourself," he continued.

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"I knew there was a limit to our opportunities just then," I said, lamely, which was worse than no excuse at all.

"Oh I don't know about that, that does not mend matters; you were at my mercy."

"You are one in a hundred. Any other man knowing me a widow would have taken advantage of the fact, tried to, long ago."

He replied gravely: "A girl I *care* enough for, to come to see, as I do *you*, I have *got to* respect. Perhaps you have noticed that I never tried to kiss you, excepting once, and I could have."

I said: "Yes, were you afraid of yourself—or me?"

"Both," he answered softly.

"Oh, I wish I was good and innocent like Miss M. and Miss C., I wish I had never been married."

He pressed my hand gently: "It is too bad, I am sorry. I must be going, little girl. After all I shall not start to-morrow, perhaps not until Wednesday.

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Will try to see you again, to say good-by."

I wanted to say all kind of soft things but I kept up my dignity as much as I could. I said: "We shall all miss you very much."

"Well, I'll see you again, Irene. Good-night." And he left. He was so gentle if he did talk plain, and it was all true. Oh, how I love him! How can I let him go?

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

To-day is Wednesday, June the twenty eighth, shall I ever forget that date, the day the sun set for me?

It is all over—all over.

What a void there is inside of me! He ran in yesterday afternoon; jumped off his wheel as he was going by, came through the parlor and into my aunt's room, which opens into the dining-room. I heard him call me, but I was slicing bananas for dinner and there

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were so many bad ones and they looked so messy I didn't want him to see me just then, so I hastened to the door and held it while I removed my big kitchen-apron and he was pushing and trying to get in, and when I let go the door banged open and there I stood in my pink wrapper with my face pinker than the gown. He went over to the window next to the lodging-house and deliberately pulled down the blind ; then he came and held me off at arm's length with both hands while he surveyed me from head to feet, and then he pulled me up to him and kissed me and then he let me go and we went into the parlor, and I felt so silly. He sat on the piano stool and I on the divan. We talked a little while, not about much of anything ; and then he said, "The boys are going to give me a 'send off,' and it will be hard to get away, but if possible, I will come in to bid you good-by, this evening ; I will start to-morrow morning ; for fear I wouldn't have a chance to see you I ran in now,

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but I will surely come again if I possibly can."

It was near the dinner hour, so he left, and about eight o'clock he came. Mr. McNess was here and I was very cool, hardly civil to him. I thought if he remained until Cecil came and I didn't see him alone I would surely die. I was almost rude and so distraught he left as soon as Cecil came. We went out to sit on the veranda for the last time and I could not bear to even let him hold my hand or touch me. I knew if he did I should just go all to pieces. And he asked why I acted so. But it seemed as if I could not talk anything. I felt all frozen up with the awful ordeal of parting from the one man I had ever loved—and parting, I knew, forever: letting him go out of my life as he had come into it and wishing I might do it bravely, and calling on my pride not to let me humble myself and fall at his feet—knowing it hopeless.

I said, quite calmly, "Cecil, you are

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going to your folks, and will see old friends, and new ones, and it is pleasant for you; but for me, it will be very lonesome when you are gone. To the ones who are left comes all the grief of parting."

He said, consolingly: "Oh, you will get used to it, of course I am glad to go home. I have been away a long time. I shall see my parents and sisters and *I am* glad to go."

"And I may *never* see you again," I said.

"The world is not so large but that we shall meet again. And I want you to be sure to send me one of those photos when they are finished and I will send you one of mine in my captain's uniform, and I will write to you soon," he assured me.

Harry came, and said: "Cecil, the boys are all down there waiting for you—come on." (I hate Harry.)

Cecil said: "I will come in about half an hour." Harry looked impatient and urged a little more; but Cecil re-

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iterated his statement and Harry went away.

O, my God! I can't tell you what we talked about, my heart is too sore. But I was brave, until he arose to go. He took both my hands in his and held them tightly and I said: "O Cecil! you don't know how I feel! This almost paralyzes me—that is how I feel—simply numb."

He said: "You must not feel like that," gave me a long, long kiss, and said: "I will write, good-by!"

He went straight down to the gate and I sank into a chair. There was only a feeling of great weakness and oppression and I could not cry. I heard his voice again and it sounded far off, and I opened my eyes and he was standing before me saying, "I must bid Mrs. Allen good-by." I managed to say, "Call to her, at the window."

Did he expect to find me in tears? Could he understand such grief as mine is too deep for any tears to wash away, only tears of blood from the heart, fall-

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ing drop by drop until life nearly ebbs away and a sigh catches it ere it is quite gone?

Mrs. Allen came to the gate and I reached the gate in some way and Mrs. Allen was joking him about leaving me. And I had to talk, so I said: "Oh, he'll never think of me when he gets home. I cannot compare with those Los Angeles girls."

Mrs. Allen said: "Judging from those I have seen, you can hold your own all right, although they are pretty *big*."

Cecil replied: "She *is* small, but oh my!"

It was all silly and finally as I felt I should start in and scream, Mrs. Allen bid him good-by and went into the house. He turned, at once, to say good-by to me, and I clung to his arm and said passionately: "You don't care as much as I do."

He replied, almost roughly: "I never cared that much for any girl," and he broke away and then I wished he had



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not come back and spoiled the other, softer parting.

This morning, on the way to the early train, he stopped, in a hack, as he saw me sitting on the store steps and I went out to him and he said a few words, the time was short and: "Good-by! Harry, I leave her in your care."

And I know he has gone out of my life and I shall never see him again, and I want to die.

Yours in tears,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

I went to the "Old Dominion" store to get some fresh ribbons for the party. Harry was there talking to a salesman by the same name, and as soon as I came in, Harry said: "Get a letter from Cecil?"

I answered: "No, he has only been away a week, it is hardly time."

He said: "I did. Got one to-night."

When I asked to see it, he wouldn't talk and they began to talk about "B"

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and I said if they were going to talk about *her* in my presence I would go, and I did.

I have gone to the post-office every night and then came home and sat on the store steps alone and felt so sad and lonesome and disappointed, as only a woman can feel.

Of course it is barely time, but I didn't think he would write to Harry first.

And I am so lonesome !

Mrs. Castro was here, and I was irritable. I was trying to dress and she kept in front of the mirror, so I said: "Oh, I do wish you would go sit down." I spoke quite impatiently, and she went into my aunt's room and when I had dressed she had gone and she has not come to see me again.

Harry came to escort me to the party ; he sat down at the piano and began playing *Cavalier Rusticana*, by Mascagni, I simply couldn't bear it, and went out on the porch, and began to cry, for the first time since he went.

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Aunt came out, and of course, could not keep still, but asked in a loud voice "What are you crying about?"

I could not answer. Harry came out and joined her, looking sympathetic. Then aunt said: "I suppose she is crying for Cecil?" Harry's look changed to one of disgust and he re-entered the house and resumed playing, and aunt scolded and was sarcastic. I went in and bathed my face and when it was time went with Harry to the party.

Harry asked: "What ailed you this evening?"

I said: "Nothing; only I thought, when you began playing, how you and Cecil used to come together and what good times we had and I couldn't help crying, that's all."

Harry said: "Well you spoiled it all, you got soft."

I said: "Perhaps I did."

He said: "Cecil never cared for you. I thought you had more spirit, Irene. He will never write to you either. I

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will show you in black and white what Cecil thinks of you, some day."

"Have you got it in black and white now?"

"No, but I will have, you'll see," he said.

But I guess it is his way of *teasing*.

Some people do not know a heart can break. Love affairs are funny to some people, all comedy. My God! and to some it means death. And when it spells that there is no greater anguish of heart bearable—nay, possible.

At the party every one directed their attention to me, and neither dancing or cards or the Graphophone could win them from their sport with me.

The Spanish boy and Mr. Dewey and four more teased me all evening about Cecil going to prepare a home for me, and others said, no, for his other sweetheart, and such a lot of silly jests and puns. I suppose such a thing would not have been possible in polite society, and all the time while I smiled and tossed

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back the *bon mots* my heart was like some dead thing.

After the party we all went in a body to serenade Mrs. Arrano; she had been quietly married that evening.

We met Mr. McNess who had acted as best man for the bridegroom, his chum, and he laughed as he turned and went on with us to join in the serenade.

We sat on the porch and sang, "Just one Girl," and "I Love as I never Loved Before," etc.

She is as much older than the groom as I am older than Cecil. And it made me think of the night she was there and Cecil talked about me to her, when he asked me to take him for something dearer than a brother.

Your gloomy

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

I bid Mrs. Castro good-by to-day. One by one my friends are leaving Arizona. Her husband sent her home to Los Angeles. I think he was afraid to

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leave her here any longer. She is constantly getting him in debt. She thoughtlessly runs bills up without his knowledge, and most people in Globe run accounts and settle up on the pay-day at the mines.

It is their first lesson and experience, and the rock on which most matrimonial barges go to pieces, at least, when the pair have no outside support and depend wholly on their own financing and management. That is why a young man and woman should be taught how to save money, and how to spend it, judiciously.

I went with Mrs. Castro to the train and sat in the car with her until the train started.

Mr. McNess and I go to the dances which are held in the park these warm nights. All the nice people go. One must constantly remember this is a mining camp, and one can do things here that one could do nowhere else with even a shade of propriety. So, a dance in the park is all very well and

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proper here. I do not enjoy them and when I dance I get a dazed feeling and I come home early, and the effort to get away from myself is useless.

"I suppose you would not have me ; because you said you would not marry a man who had not been good. And of course I have not," Mr. McNess said.

"No, I could not marry you ; you know whom I love. And I do not want to ever marry a man who has seen too much of the world," I replied.

"Well I am not so bad as they say I am. I paid Genie, the singer, some attention because I felt sorry for her, but I give you my word there was nothing between us. I love you, Irene, and I think we would be very happy together."

"My dear boy, you have said all that before, but you know I love some one else and I have told you too much of my past. I suppose you think it strange and unreasonable for me to demand so much in a man, but I am like a *man* of the world ; I know what men are and I

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am weary of bad people of either sex. I could not love any but the most moral young man, even an innocent man all the more, if there is such a man. I am a woman of the world and above all things I want a man—who is not. You are an average young man, perhaps a little better. Your disposition is such you would be very devoted and true to a wife. I could look over your follies better than another's, perhaps, but my heart is gone. We shall always be dear, dear friends."

"You are the dearest girl I ever met and it is hard to give up the thought of never having you, yet I have known all along. I shall feel very bad when you leave; but I hope to see you in Los Angeles this summer and we may have a nice time together there," he said, and his blue eyes looked so damp I felt very, very sorry.

Uncle has bonded his mine and if he sells it, we will go to Los Angeles right away. It has been two weeks and Cecil has not written. Mr. McNess comes



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almost every evening and it relieves my mind of the strain while I am talking with him. I love him dearly as a perfectly congenial, sympathetic friend.

Cecil and I may meet in Los Angeles if he does not go to Mexico as he intended. And I heard he was let out of the mine and so will not return here. I knew, I felt he would never come here again, and I knew he was apt to go almost any place, where there are mines. Oh, the suspense !

Your loving

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

Uncle has sold his mine, for fifty thousand dollars, and we are *en route* to Los Angeles. Uncle and aunt are going east to see his "Yankee" relatives in Mass. Aunt gave all the furniture to her son's wife, all, excepting a cabinet, full of mineral specimens, and that she gave to John, the foreman. She helped him carry it up to his shack, and when she returned she was crying. Harry

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came in last night and he sat down in the torn-up parlor, on his favorite seat, the piano-stool, for the last time. The piano is gone, and I sat on a roll of carpet and he made all sorts of excuses because he had not been to see me since the party we attended together. But I knew ; I heard how infatuated he had become with "B."

Even my little second-cousin ran in to tell me when he walked on the street with the "singer."

And he confessed that he had not received a letter from Cecil since he went away, and that he had said many things to tease me.

He said : Cecil's father had written the superintendent of the Buffalo, that Cecil was home with the "children," (he meant his daughters) enjoying himself, and that he and his sisters were going to Avalon, Catalina Island, soon. That is not far from Los Angeles, and it is a swell summer resort. Harry remained quite a while and then bid us good-by ; because he could not come

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into town in the morning. This morning Mr. McNess called early and he sat on the roll of carpet and I on the top of my trunk; there was nothing else left in the room. He gave me some dainties for our lunch, and he did look awfully unhappy and there were tears in his eyes and he could not talk much, or I either, and we were rather glad when Rose, the old Indian woman, who often comes to see aunt came and squatted down in the middle of the floor and began to rock back and forth and cry and mumble Indian words. I cannot spell them, but I know the meaning: "no wane ah! no wane ah! salamanda nanther!" It meant "no good, no good, our going away, no friend any more." She thinks aunt her only friend, because she saved her from going to the reservation once. I'll tell you the story, briefly. Some years ago, when she was a young squaw, she awoke one night and heard her tribe, the Apaches of San Carlos, planning a raid on a settlement about fifteen or



THE SQUAW AT THE MASSACRE.





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maybe twenty miles from the reservation. Rose had worked for some of the families there and had many friends among them, so she persuaded her young husband to accompany her and they ran all the way that night, reaching the place just before daybreak. They just had time to arouse the sleeping inhabitants and they had just collected in the dobie school-house and fortified themselves, when the band of Indians rushed into the town with their war-whoops. In seeking their own safety, the people had forgotten those who had given the warning and at the peril of their lives saved them. The brave squaw and her buck had been left outside.

The Indians seeing at once that they had been betrayed and hearing a rustle in the bushes and weeds nearby went away as rapidly as they had come.

One shot had killed Rose's husband and one arrow had partly cut off her hand. She walked to a block where an

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axe was lying and deliberately chopped off the partly severed portion of her hand. Afterward, many of the people moved to Globe, and Rose also.

One day, long afterward, the agent was rounding up the Indians to march them back to the reservation, like a drove of sheep. Rose broke away from them when opposite my aunt's house, and running in, clung to my aunt and begged to be saved; not to let them take her. "Apaches kill, Apaches kill me," she wailed. The sheriff was going to force her along. My aunt begged him to allow Rose to remain, but he was obstinate. Then my aunt, calling on some influential citizen asked him to tell the story of Rose's loyalty. When they heard, she was allowed to remain in Globe for all time.

Whenever Rose sees an old Apache in town who knows her she runs into the house in great fear. She always has troubles. When the Indians lose a relative they burn all their own clothing and move their camp.

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Rose comes in so often, with just a skirt on and a piece of calico around her brown shoulders, her hair cut short and even across the back of her neck, and putting her head sidewise on the palm of her good hand, rolls her eyes upward and sighs long and deep and moans and tells my aunt some relative has departed to the happy hunting grounds from which there is no returning. And she runs her hand up and down my form and intimates she has lost a niece or some one my size. And then my aunt gives her new clothing, quite nice waists sometimes. It happens so often I have a suspicion that poor crippled Rose has a weakness for new waists. She begged the salt, to keep the evil spirits away from herself, or aunt—or something like that, and went wailing and moaning out into the kitchen with aunt. Jim also hung around. He is the Indian who washes dishes for aunt and eats everything that is left over. He dresses in black store-clothes and looks like an Indian



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dude and so villainous, except when he finds my aunt's whisky demijohn, and I don't know but that the cunning grin he has is more murderous still. Anyway it frightens me awfully and I do not stay around long where he is. When we have fish and he sees the head in a pan of scraps, he just acts awful; as if it was the very Indians' devil himself in the pan and I have to take the pan and throw the fish out before he will wash a dish. And the squaws walk in and sit on the kitchen floor, and if I give them a piece of bread nicely buttered, they look mad and throw it away and gabber to each other, but they will devour an old stale crust in one bite. Jim has a history also, and he, too, hates the Apaches. One day, the Apache-Kid rode up to the tent, seized Jim's eighteen-year old daughter and tried to elope with her. The mother ran out and grabbed her by the dress and the Apache-Kid turned and fired, killing her instantly, and, I suppose, made off with the girl. So Jim also

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hates his tribe. He was hanging around out in front of the house and I presume he would have looked sorrowful if he could have got any kind of expression on his face at all, except the usual one of meanness and cunning.

My cousin and his wife and all the children, all came before we left, and everybody cried, and oh! such a time! It is awful when you only leave home once in sixteen or twenty years. We all piled into the 'bus, and there was not room left for my cousin, so he stood on the steps, and held on.

And at the train there were ever so many people and more crying, and Mr. McNess looked as if he never expected to see me alive again. And now we are on the way and I am glad. I have written you this long letter because we have to stop here in the midst of the desert while some of the track which the recent washout has damaged is repaired. We are at Mariposa and it is the hottest day I ever experienced. It is now four o'clock and we expect to

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start about six p. m. This is the middle of July and there will be nothing but hot desert until we are almost right into Los Angeles. Aunt's face is red from crying and Dot's (aunt's grandchild) from drinking red pop, and uncle is in the smoker. You can imagine how excited I feel over future possibilities, so I haven't tried to tell you.

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

We arrived in Los Angeles to-day. Uncle has taken a suite of rooms at the Nadeau, but I wish he had engaged them at the biggest and swellest hotel in the city, although it is very nice and then I shall be out to sister's most of the time. She lives out near West-lake.

My heart is beating wild with expectancy. It is nearly three weeks since Cecil arrived. Is he in town? when last I heard of him he was at Catalina,

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or rather, was going. We shall go over in a few days.

Am going out to sister's now. Am waiting for aunt to change her dress. But until I see *him*, even sister does not count; but I saw her just before I came west; she visited me, ten months ago. What changes have come since then! Only to see him once more; even though he does not recognize me.

I have a premonition of disappointment which I cannot shake off, and I *am* so nervous.

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

Disappointment numbs one. When I arrived at Avalon my fears were realized.

On the way over I lay down in my cabin all the way because I have never been on the ocean before and it *was* rough. And I was afraid I would become sea-sick, having been told how they lined up at the beach when every

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steamer came in and "guyed" the passengers when they landed, if they looked the least bit pale or walked wobbly, and I did not know but that *he* might be in the line. We passed within speaking distance of the boat bound the other way, but of course as I was lying down I didn't know until we had passed.

When we arrived, he was *not* in line. I dressed, and, all expectant, went over to the pavilion with aunt. After dinner, aunt met some Globe friends there and no doubt felt quite at home.

A nice old man sat next to me, with lovely white hair and such black eyes, and he looked very distinguished. He offered to introduce me to some nice young men, if I cared to dance, but I smiled as sweet as I could and declined. I wonder if he was one of the Bannings who own the Island — or is it only Avalon?

I was watching every entrance, with my heart ready to jump.

And presently I saw Mr. Dewey. I

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forgot to tell you that he left soon after Mrs. Castro. He came right over to me, and the first thing he said was: "Cecil left to-day!" My heart jumped down to my feet. So, I had passed him on the Heramosa! Now, isn't fate against me?

And as if that didn't make me want to die right there, Mr. Dewey said: "Cecil enjoyed himself fine while here; had a score of girls, if he had one."

"Indeed!" I said, "And did you meet his sisters, and how did you like them?"

"Yes, I met his sisters—quite nice girls; didn't take my heart by storm though; I guess you know where *my* heart is," he replied, in the low voice and with the intense look Pearl admired.

"Your heart! Had you one?" I said.

"Miss Sisson, it is no jest. I loved that woman as I shall never love another."

"What right had you to love her?" I asked severely.

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"None at all, but at first Mrs. Castro led me to think—to—well, I made a mistake," he stammered.

"You often make mistakes; for instance, when you walked at midnight with Mrs. More and separated man and wife!" I said.

It was no conversation for a beach pavilion, but every one was up dancing and no one near us, and I felt mean enough to want to hurt some one as *I* was hurt, and he began it; so I stuck the stiletto into him and then kept pressing it in, and no stiletto can wound deeper than the tongue of an angry woman.

"We all make mistakes; pardon me, but *you* did, I think. As for that affair—I never was more innocent in motive or more deeply grieved over anything; but a reputation which I do not deserve was against me."

"You don't deserve the reputation of a libertine? And yet you followed a married woman here to complete the ruin you tried to accomplish in Globe!"

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I like you, Mr. Dewey, but you are not doing right," I answered reprovingly.

"I never had any woman talk like that to me before, and if I was not such a friend of Cecil's and would-be friend of yours, I wouldn't stand for it."

"Very well, I'll not preach any more. But tell me, have you seen her, here?"

He said: "Yes, and she would hardly talk to me, seemed to have grown afraid of me, or something. I thought if Mc-Ness came over, us four might go out together sometimes, very quietly, no one need know."

"Did you think I would agree to that?" I asked, surprised.

"How did I know; there would be no harm, just a little dinner perhaps; wouldn't you have consented—been a sort of chaperone, you know?" he replied, trying to smooth it over.

"No, it would have been impossible. Be good and leave her alone. And have you nothing to tell me of Cecil; has he said nothing that would interest me?"



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" Nothing that I can remember, but then, I saw him only a little, for a day or two — his sisters were nearly always with him, and other girls."

The dancers came and sat down and the orchestra started up a waltz and we arose to dance. My feet were as heavy as my heart, and the floor was so very slippery that I only embarrassed my partner and could not keep step.

We returned to the hotel early and I had a wild desire to leave the Island that night.

The next morning before breakfast I wrote him how disappointed I was to miss him. I sent him both my hotel and sister's address, telling him I would be pleased to have him call and that we would return to the city in a few days, about three.

We left Avalon in the afternoon.

Aunt did not care for the place and uncle did not see what there was to pay such a price for at the Metropole. So, as they only came to please me,

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anyway, here we are in Los Angeles again, and Cecil has not called yet.

Have written him a note, telling him we will attend the Orpheum to-night, which box we shall occupy, and expressing a desire to see him there. I can hardly wait for night to come. I mailed the letter late, to his father's address, which I found in the directory, and I am not sure he will get it before closing hours.

Never was so anxious for a theatre in my life, and I have a new dress and hat to wear.

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

We arrived early at the Orpheum. We occupied an upper box on the left side. Dot and I sat in the front chairs with aunt and uncle and a friend in the back. I had on a lovely new gown, with a deep cream yoke, low down on the shoulders and a cream chiffon hat. They came from a swell establishment

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so I know that I looked well ; and I can never keep up a Delsarte carriage unless my gown hangs well.

I scanned the house briefly but could not see him. I watched the entrance closely. I disliked to make too free use of my glasses, but my fingers ached to. I kept one eye on the lower box on the opposite side of the house, which was still vacant, though the theatre was rapidly filling.

The second number was on, when three men came in and entered the vacant box. They leisurely removed their top coats, arranged their chairs and seated themselves. One sat far back in the shadow. The lights around the box dazzled my eyes so much I could scarcely see, but my heart began to beat strangely and I knew without seeing—by that fine intuition which is given to women alone—that it was Cecil Whitmore who sat there.

I told my aunt and she said : “ You are mistaken, that is not him.”

But if love is blind, love can see far—

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ther than some people can with good eyes. So before I raised my opera glasses to my eyes I knew it *was* Cecil.

He never once glanced up all evening, though I in my white and Dot fidgeting around, we must have been conspicuous enough. He bowed and smiled to several in the audience, and I thought to some one in particular. My thoughts reverted to the girl in the oval gold frame and my jealous eyes tried to search out a doll-faced blonde and then I thought of Ethel.

He seemed to see every one but us.

To attract his attention I even arose and took Dot down for a drink, walking leisurely up the aisle and Dot looking like a lovely little fairy in a Parisian creation, all white and pink and pert little bows. Of course I glanced neither to the right or left, realizing I may be making on awful breach, but a child excuses a great deal.

As I re-seated myself Aunt told me Cecil had taken the glasses from one of his companions and followed me with

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them up the aisle and down, yet when I entered the box he never glanced up.

I thought the audience must hear my heart beat and read my secret in my face.

I *tried* to keep my eyes directed toward the stage, but it was almost impossible to keep them from returning to that lower box, seeking in vain for recognition. That figure back in the shadow was all I could see. All else was a blur. On the stage were dim, shadowy forms, and voices could be heard far off in the distance. I was conscious, in a dazed way, that there was a sea of faces down below me and moving fans and a perfume arose that made me feel faint and suffocating, and I wanted to rise up and cry out. I think my heart broke as I sat in that box. I don't believe I can ever go in one again without a shudder, and when I do, that awful spell will envelop me and I shall live two hours again in torture.

On the way home, aunt stopped about two blocks from the theatre to talk to

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some one. I stood a little apart. As some one was passing I saw Aunt put out her hand and stop him. I looked and it was Cecil! I stood rooted to the spot about three yards from them. He was going on without seeing me, was almost past, when, beyond my power of control, my hand also reached out and touched his arm. Oh! the shame of it! He pretended to be glad to see me; protested that he had not seen me at the theatre—that he had not received my note.

Aunt said something about leaving us to walk on together and started on with Dot.

"Mr. Whitmore is with friends," I hastened to say, as I saw his look of hesitancy and embarrassment—but aunt was already out of hearing.

"Yes, you must excuse me, I must hurry to catch up with my friends, I am coming to call soon. Shall I call at the number you gave, or the hotel?" he replied hurriedly.

"Perhaps the hotel will be more con-

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venient for you and I am there more than I am at sister's," I answered.

We were walking fast and we overtook my aunt, and again excusing himself, he lifted his hat, and almost ran.

A few steps, and we passed him with his friends. They lifted their hats as we passed them.

So this is the end—to the last shred of hope! The premonition realized.

I am crushed completely, my pride is humbled to the earth.

All my life I shall remember this night. This is an entirely different Cecil from the one I knew; even the way he lifted his hat was like some one else.

And his cool, courteous voice was that of the polished man of society, not the voice of the sincere, unaffected Cecil I knew in Globe.

Oh, my God! my God! Why hast thou forsaken me!

Why do men do these things?

Yours hopelessly,

IRENE.

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DEAR GRACE,—

I have written to him. I couldn't help it. So, against my better judgment I sent the following letter:

DEAR MR. WHITMORE,—

I thought you had too much strength of character to "cut" a friend and especially a woman. I admired you for your sense of honor, your ambition and determination, your strength of will, and all those qualities which I find so rare in men, these days. Perhaps you did not find so much in me to win your esteem; but you must have seen what I *really am* notwithstanding my surroundings in Globe and the influences which led me into improprieties at my aunt's home. You must be discriminating enough for that.

I know that I lost your good opinion, but surely I don't deserve the treatment of to-night. I found you very congenial and I imagined it was mutual.

I admit you have hurt me very deeply. I value your friendship too highly to lose it entirely.

I tried to entertain you, and make



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the life of a mining camp less lonesome for you. I did all that circumstances afforded and I realize how little it was, yet, I thought you would, at least, call and pay your respects when you learned I was here. I am deeply grieved to find myself mistaken in your character and find that you are a "snob."

However, if at any time, you care to call you have my sister's address.

Yours very truly,

IRENE SISSON."

You see I wrote at some length, and yet there was so much I left unsaid. But to resist writing that was indeed impossible.

Your own,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

He has not answered my letter. He has not called.

He has shown me in every way he wishes the—friendship—to end.

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It was a winter's flirtation, a pastime in barren Arizona, with its warm evenings in the winter season.

I was a source of amusement, a plaything to while away the tedious hours of a man's "ennui."

Or—he loved me, and no longer believing me pure, love died when respect ceased to exist—two things that must go hand in hand with a man, if not with a woman. Perhaps he feared temptation and its consequence—dishonor.

Perhaps he feared the overthrow of his ambition and ultimate success unless he ceased to know one so penniless and detrimental to his plans as I might prove.

Either he cared for me not at all, or he cared very much.

How am I to know whether I was all—or nothing—to him.

Never before, in all my life, has any man treated me like this. They always, at least, *pretended* to care, and be pleased at meeting me again. They

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usually *begged* to call. Not one ignored me like this.

How can I endure it?

Is *this* my punishment?

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

Weary days, and so restless! Aunt has departed for the East and I am with sister.

Every day I dress and wait. But he never comes, like the girl in Tennyson's "Moated Grange" am I,

"He cometh not, he cometh not.  
And I am aweary. . . ."

But, he *did* write. Here is the letter; I shall keep the two letters I have received from him, always.

I wrote him a few lines when aunt and I went up to San Francisco, and I enclosed a picture of Dot and I, and I wrote that Dot wanted me to send the picture, it was a poor one of Dot, but good of me.

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There is nothing in his letter, yet they are so dear !

“ Oxnard, Aug. 8.

DEAR IRENE,—

I am very sorry you feel the way you do about my not coming to see you. I certainly would have, if I had been in town, but you see I have been up here for a week, and the two or three days I was in town (while you were there) I was very busy. For my family were getting ready to go away for the summer, and I also had to get ready a little to come up here. I don't know how long I shall be here, but not long, when I shall probably go to Mexico and I will go to Los Angeles first. If possible, I shall see you then, although I don't expect to be in town more than two days at the most. I am sorry you thought I wanted to cut you, for in the first place I never do that, no matter whom it is, and more especially those whom I know well, as I do you.

I trust you will realize that it was hardly possible for me to have seen you and that we are friends as before.

Yours very sincerely,

CECIL WHITMORE,

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P. S. Please excuse the pencil, but it is the only thing I have to write with as I haven't all the luxuries of home any more.

C. W."

I was glad of an opportunity to write again. I lost no time in answering. I told him that I was glad to learn that after all, he was *not* a snob.

And I shall see him! I shall see him! Because I do believe he means to come, but I don't believe the excuses he made. In a month, even though away some of the time, he *could* have called, at the hotel, for a few moments, while passing, at any rate.

Perhaps I shall not be nice to him after all.

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

At last! He came. It is almost six weeks since I received his letter from Oxnard and I was feeling hopeless again. I was sitting in the parlor, working on

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a sofa-pillow, when, glancing out the window, I saw a man, riding a beautiful black horse, canter up to the house next to my sister's. The two houses are much alike. The man sat his horse like a Prince (in a story). He dismounted and ran lightly up the steps and rang the bell. It struck me how much he looked like Cecil. I held my breath and waited, watching through the lace curtain at the window. He came down the steps and started toward our house. It was him. I caught my breath hard, and it seemed to stop again. I felt as if I could not possibly utter one word.

While I made a frantic effort to compose myself and form some words in my mind, sister went to open the door.

When he entered I was able to say calmly, and apparently perfectly self-possessed :

"Why, Mr. Whitmore! How do you do? This is a surprise."

I touched the tips of his fingers, and introduced him to my sister. She at once went into the dining-room, ad-

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joining the parlor and sat down near the open portico. It was about dusk, yet too early for lights, so I could just see him as I took a chair a few feet from the one he had just seated himself in.

He had on the most correct riding togs and a yellow chrysanthemum in the lapel of his coat. He had gained some in flesh and looked more handsome than I had ever seen him. He removed his gloves and toyed with them nervously. I bent over my embroidery because I could not always meet his eyes. Sister was quite invisible in the darker room, but a word from her now and then assured us she was there and only added to our embarrassed constraint. It did not seem good form either for her to talk, in that way, from the other room, to be heard and not seen.

If we had been alone, it might all have been different.

There was resentment in my heart, toward him, which stifled my joy, and I was very much embarrassed about

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the letter I had written him and I wondered while he talked about his various journeys since leaving Globe, *what* had finally made him call? Was it pity? Was it simply to keep his word? Was it curiosity? All of which I resented. I wished to let him see how I felt and yet I was trying to do my duty as a polite hostess to a guest.

Anger, pride, love, all struggling for supremacy inside of me! How *could* I talk!

He spoke of the journeys he had taken and still expected to take and thus excused himself, or rather, tried to have me see how all his time had been taken up, yet not exactly apologizing. I couldn't have stood it, if he had.

I asked the same questions over twice and he repeated himself and I think sister thought us two idiots.

I talked about Globe people, whom we, neither one, cared anything about, at least, I was sure he did not care.

But I knew if we once became silent it would be awful, we neither one could



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break the spell, and all the time I was glancing at him and then at the embroidery, all of which I have had to rip out since.

Well, it *was* awful.

And this is why I cannot write one thing down as we said it.

When he had gone, and he did not remain over fifteen minutes, there seemed to remain no satisfaction at all, even though he hesitated, after he had taken his hat from the hall tree, and lingered in the hall. I opened the door for him at once for fear he might think I wanted to be kissed, now we were alone.

I wonder if he was disappointed at finding me in a cottage—though the neighborhood is wealthy and sister is in the “Blue-book,” the cottage is plain and small, but *neat* to the extreme.

Why couldn't we both have been natural?

Sister said: “He is very boyish and handsome, and how embarrassed he was!”

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I wonder if it would have been different if I had met him at the door, and called him Cecil and acted in the girlish way he has always seen me in? Oh, I know he will never come again. And this is almost as bad as if he had not come at all.

I would give anything to have it all over again and I would not be so stiff and strange.

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

It seems a month since he was here, though it is little over a week by the calendar. I have been terribly restless ever since—feel almost worse than before. I sit on the veranda after dinner every evening, and the red and yellow roses climbing over the railing and on up to the roof of the house, make the veranda such a bower of roses, I can't help thinking what a place it would be to sit with Cecil and it seems I cannot stand it—the longing.

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I received some Globe news. The "foreman" has married his cousin; in the good old English fashion. Mr. Morehouse, the Spanish boy, is also married. Every one gets married in Globe.

And Mr. McNess has died of pneumonia. He was such a dear good boy. I had a hard cry over that. I am indeed grieved. Mrs. Castro calls sometimes, but I am not good company for any one.

Am ashamed to confess that I wrote Cecil another letter. I said:

I regret that I was surprised to see you, the confusion made it impossible to have a nice little chat. I know you will not come again. You do not care to retain my friendship and—why should you?

Please keep your promise to me and send me your photo. The only picture I had of you, the little blue-print, I lost while in San Francisco. This means so much to me I hope you will grant the request. There was so much I wanted to say, I am sorry I missed

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the opportunity and I feel it will not come again.

Be kind to me.

Yours sincerely,

IRENE."

This is as near as I can remember the note; I sent it at once.

I know he will not pay any attention to it, unless, in his old contrary way, he will come to prove me wrong in thinking he wouldn't; he might do that.

Why haven't I more pride!

But his likeness would be so much to me. I must try to get that.

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

It is the unexpected again. If one could but be prepared, one's whole career might be different by a part well played when the time came. The scene is on and we make our entrance and by the playing of a rôle we make or mar the play—and it is a drama or a tragedy

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as fate directs after we have been given our cue.

For the first time since Cecil called, a month ago, I was not dressed and my hair all fluffed, in expectation of him. This morning I had on a soiled old black skirt, a badly worn and very unbecoming plaid waist, sans collar and likewise belt; hollows and lines under my eyes from loss of sleep. I had been in the kitchen cooking a Spanish dish my aunt taught me, and had just seated myself in the corner of the dining room, when sister, out on the veranda, opened the door for some one.

Then some one came on in and stood between the folding doors of the parlor. I looked up, and there stood Cecil. I was taken completely by surprise and could not escape. I went up to him and shook hands, then excused myself and went into my room. I could not find a collar or a ribbon and I hesitated over one gown and another and finally put on my belt and came out again not improved in appearance at all.

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I said : " I have just been trying to do some Spanish cooking my aunt taught me. I was in the kitchen when you came."

He said in his old boyish way, flatly contradicting me, " That is not so ; you were sitting out there in the corner of the dining-room when I came in."

He was perfectly natural, but I was just as ashamed and embarrassed as the other time. I put my hands up on the knobs of the chair, and, remembering myself, took them down again, only to discover them up there in another moment.

I said : " Have you heard from Harry since you left Globe ? "

He replied : " No, I haven't."

I said : " He has been very devoted to ' B ' since you left. He seldom came to see me and after you were not there he became different."

He said, with a laugh : " I don't blame him one bit. ' B ' is a fine looking girl, and I am afraid you overestimate *my* good influence."

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He said it in such a way I fear he too is different, and perhaps in Frisco he has learned things. Oh, I am so afraid.

"Mr. Morehouse is married to Miss M.," I ventured.

"He is foolish to marry so young; he can't be over twenty-two." Then with unnecessary emphasis: "You bet *I* shan't get married until I am thirty!"

That same old statement, and the same little chill went all over me and lodged in my heart, and I was afraid to have him see my face, yet I couldn't hide it.

He said, abruptly: "You must not write to me *like that* again."

His voice was soft and as one reproves a child. Did he mean because what I said was untrue and foolish, or that such letters annoyed him, or for me not to write at all? I imagine he meant the first.

I let the chance of the conversation to drift into personalities go by. And he started another topic—gossip;

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"Have you heard about Mrs. Allen?" he asked.

"Yes, I heard she had gone east with some man. Mrs. Allen induced me to take too many toddies and I *was* rolling after her like a ball down hill. But all the time I thought she was only a trifle giddy, a little reckless, no doubt; but her husband drank and remained away so much, I did not blame her; but I always thought she was all right—straight," I answered.

"And you never *knew*?" he asked.

"Of course not. I *had* heard things, but I did not believe them. I never saw anything except the toddie habit."

"Well, I guess Harry knew," he said, meaningly—then added, "Oh, I know lots of things," knowingly.

I wonder if he heard the rumors about aunt and the foreman (which I heard from Mrs. Allen before we left) and which accounted for her wishing to keep him in the family by marrying him to me, and also why it took them



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so long to hang up the milk pail every night! Did Cecil hear all that and more, much more about others connected with me? I did not know just what he meant to insinuate.

Oh, our conversation was not nice at all. The worst kind of gossip. Something we neither one cared to listen to. Oh, how did it happen? Why do such things happen? Then I told him about the people I had met, but could not hit upon any one he knew. I thought afterward of some old families he must have known.

Then sister called me. I told Cecil I presumed my dish was burning in the oven, to excuse me. Sister had called me to ask me to show Cecil the portrait my brother-in-law was painting of me. Naturally, we are proud of his talent, and regret with him, that he cannot study in Europe. But he should confine himself to landscapes. However, the brunette coloring and the composition *is* fine. Cecil knows nothing of art. I have found that out.

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I came lugging the picture in and said: "I wish your criticism of my portrait." And I had hardly placed it in a light before he said: "Humph! wouldn't ever know it was you if I hadn't seen it here." All the beauty of coloring was lost to him; it was not an exact likeness.

"Who painted it?" he asked.

Yet I have told him my brother-in-law is an artist, so he must have known. He started to go, and I couldn't call his attention to the really fine picture of my little niece, a soft, delicate piece of coloring, the sunlight on Mount Shasta, and the glorious California sunsets which adorn the walls and are a credit to a greater artist than my brother-in-law. Neither could I take him out to the studio and show him the old bits there and the little gems of unfinished inspirations. He had suddenly become disagreeable and contrary, as I had seen him a few times in Globe, never knowing why.

His hurry to go at once was rude.

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So this, the artistic side, which I am proud of, and which compensates for some of my coarser surroundings, and which I *did* want him to see, had only resulted in—what seemed to him—an attempt to show off. And how could I attempt to detain him? I followed him out to the hall and, standing in the door with the full, glaring noon-day sun upon me, he looked down and saw the spotted old skirt, the faded waist, the collarless throat, the not very neatly arranged hair and the lines and hollows and deep shadows under my eyes, and I do not know how many blemishes besides, while I looked up into a smooth boyish face, clear, keen, blue eyes, smooth light brown hair, and stalwart limbs clad in bicycle raiment. What opposite pictures, the one he would carry away and the one that would remain with me!

My little niece was peeping over my shoulder and she said, afterward, that he looked as if he wanted to kiss me, but I know she was mistaken.

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I said: "I suppose it will be three months more before I see you again."

"Longer than *that*," he said in a short, decided voice.

"And you won't write?" I asked wistfully.

"I don't even write to my folks, they are always complaining about it."

He still stood there, looking at me and, abruptly, he said: "Good-by!" and ran down the steps and jumped on his wheel.

I went into the house and sat down in my room and cried.

His manner had been contrary and cold and I don't see why he came at all.

Oh, I cannot see where the thing that is wrong exists, where is the "rift in the lute which makes the music mute."

Your troubled

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

Have read something in the paper that makes me wild! Yet why should it? Perhaps you cannot understand. It was that his two sisters and three

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other girls are to make their *début* at a dance, and nine hundred invitations have been issued by their respective families.

It means a round of social dissipation for Cecil, and brings forcibly to my mind the fact that I never had a coming-out party, never was a bud ; and that the gulf between our positions is wider than I realized, and also that he *could* have secured invitations for me. In such a crush who would ask who I am, or give me a passing thought ? How different had he loved !

He would then have asked his sisters to call ; I should have been invited out some. Here, in Los Angeles, people who live in mansions and those who live in cottages exchange calls and mingle together. Some of the "upper set" call on sister, but she has been a semi-invalid for so many years she has lost interest in people and does not care at all for society, even were she in a better position to entertain. And so, it never has and never can go any far-

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ther now, and *aid me*. Even the ones who call are those who have no sons or daughters. See, how fate check-mates me at every move. Just a little social influence, now—and who can tell! And there is none, and I am not clever enough, or self-assertive enough to win some such backing.

One family, whom sister has neglected to call on since they moved to another street, a few blocks farther away, have two daughters, who although not wealthy, and even make all their own gowns, are extremely popular in the “younger set” in which Cecil and his sisters move. Sister, for my sake, wants to resume a calling acquaintance, but I will not let her make advances, now, when she has not been near them for a year. The cause would be too apparent and I have *some* pride left.

So, he is in society I cannot enter. Yet the gate is so *nearly* open to me the least push of *another's* hand would fling it wide open.

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He is surrounded by beautiful girls in stunning toilettes; how can I expect him to think of me for an instant, or even remember that I exist. *This* is what almost prostrates me.

And only one who has been in a like position can sympathize with me. The debut of his two pure sisters is like a blow to me. The contrast is too great. I can neither eat nor sleep. I walk out to West Lake park and look into the still water—such a calm soothing bed for me and my sorrow, and I am tempted. But I should only be fished out wet and cold and disgraced, and frighten sister into nervous prostration, and I think of Ella Wilcox's idea of the suicides, who live between heaven and earth, and see all. That is worse than this.

So I sit down and cry and cry and cannot stop. Sometimes only my heart sheds tears, when the fountain of my eyes is dry.

My face is ashen, my eyes dull and mouth drawn. I have the *dead* ex-

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pression of those who are dead in life. *Something* gone out of the face, that never returns.

I have seen those faces, and wondered and pitied—now I *know*.

Forgive me, but you must know all the details unto the end—the end——

Yours,

IRENE.

DEAR GRACE,—

I do not want to make *you* feel bad, like my sister's household; they feel much the same as if a corpse lay shrouded in the house. I go around so pale and silent—yet I want *someone* to know how I suffer.

Every noon when my brother-in-law brings the morning paper from the store, I grab it eagerly, and like one demented, turn with nervous fingers to the "society column." *His* name is *always* there! And then I do not care for any lunch, but sister insists on my sitting down to the table. They are afraid I will starve myself, I think.



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We all sit there in silence ; no one has any appetite. My sister says nothing. She is a woman ; she has had her romance and she understands. But my brother-in-law gets out of patience with weakness and says things that open the wounds and are like probing into a raw sore. Tries to appeal to my pride. I have none. Tries to show me the hopelessness of it, the absurdity—all of which fills me with new determination to gain the impossible.

He is disgusted with me, and he is a strong socialist besides and hates any kind of society, or any one of wealth. That comes from his own thwarted ambitions and having to weigh out sugar and grind coffee when he desires to paint, paint, paint.

Sometimes I think I cannot stand any more. If I might only die ! If it wasn't for mamma—I must live for mamma, we have only each other, though we *have* lived so much apart.

My brother-in-law hides the paper now when he comes to lunch, but I

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always find it and torture myself. In a desperate moment I wrote once more to Cecil and appealed to his pity. Oh! if I can only see him just *once* more!

If I go down to the theatre, the West Lake park concerts Sunday, some club dance, anywhere, it is to *see him*. I strain my eyes until every nerve in me is strung to its tightest tension, almost snapping. Why don't they snap! And I never see him, never, never. I tried to make my letter to him as sane as possible.

It does not express what I feel and yet it was too much.

If only I had the strength to suffer in silence; to tear up *all* the letters I write him, as I do some, so many I cannot count them. It is the only way.

A girl never wins by writing her love to a man and she more often loses him that way, after he *is* won, and they are engaged and she thinks she has the right. Men want to do *all* the wooing and love-making, and a woman should show resistance. How easy to

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know what to do, and how hard to do it! A girl should always reserve all her favors, especially her kisses, and be stingy with any *words* of affection until she can call him husband; and even then, men invariably want what they cannot obtain easily. It is their nature to *overcome* and a woman's to *withstand*. I know, I know. But when one's heart is breaking and it is all hopeless anyway, one becomes reckless and throws discretion to the four winds.

I could proclaim my love from the house-top and not be ashamed! It is my nature to give all—too freely. Yet I wish I *was strong*. I wish I could suffer in silence.

I enclose the last letter, the last letter I shall ever write him. And I know full well that it is one too many. What matter!

“DEAR CECIL,—

I know the many society functions of late, since your sisters' “coming out”

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has taken up all your time. But won't you find leisure to come to me, once more, before you leave to be away indefinitely?

If you know what I have suffered since I realized the awful gulf between us—the difference in our positions in the world—you would not refuse.

Believe me, if I had known, I would not have cultivated your friendship in Globe.

I know I lost your respect and I confess you could have had your will—then.

My sister has been an invalid thirteen years and keeps up only the most formal calls, so it is very lonesome for me.

I value your friendship so highly I cannot bear to lose it. Have been ill, and a sight of your face would cheer me.

Won't you come? Once more, and let us say good-by—forever.

You said when you were here,—not to write like that again—pardon me if I cause you annoyance. Will send this to the firm's address.

You have unconsciously ended my life.

If I have written anything—better

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left unsaid—remember I have been ill.

Yours sincerely,  
IRENE."

DEAR GRACE,—

When a girl wakes up at twenty-six, and with clear eyes, from which all the glamour and illusions have been removed, finds she has *wasted the best years* of her life in vague dreams and false beliefs, and sees at last, with wide open eyes, her castles crumbled to earth, and everything in its barren, naked truth, it is terrible!

It is worse than death!

And to know you have been a failure, everything failed, the feeling is inexpressibly crushing.

All the romance and artistic covering which hid things and transformed them in the world she loved to call Bohemia, removed, are laid bare—what an awakening!

Alone—alone with the soul! What is more terrible than that—if the soul has been wronged?

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Have I not in another way always been alone? Without true life-long friends and a home and the surroundings which make a girl's life so sheltered, there is no excuse for her to make the mistakes—that end in despair.

Sometimes I had a home, sometimes not. My adopted parents moved around here and there. My home was that of a hotel, much of the time, and that is no home at all, not even though my father was often the proprietor. We also seemed doomed to an unending list of failures, and the last was when my parents failed to find wedded life a success and separated and became divorced, and then I tried the world alone and found it hard, hard, hard.

From moving around, my education was not complete; I lacked the culture I craved and still crave, and always will yearn for.

One day, I said "for the sake of ambition!" I was even proud of the sacrifice in my ignorance.

I began the study of music, only to

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fail. I had passed the days of a clean, bright mind and unclouded memory. Superficial knowledge, disappointments, sorrow, and so much to pervert my thoughts, made it hard to concentrate my mind upon my studies.

I shall take it up again, but now, it can never be anything but funeral dirges. I have always wanted to excel and not until a great love came to me—for a pure minded boy—did I see myself as I really am and realize what I have lost. *Nothing* is worth the price of pure womanhood, and folly demands that price and so much, so very much besides. All my girlhood lacked in proper surroundings and influences cannot console me for the mistakes or take away the awful despairing hopelessness which is crushing me with such relentless force!

Oh girls, with true homes, fond parents, loving sisters and brothers, perhaps the advantage of college and fraternities, the coming-out party and the

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properly chaperoned girlhood—you don't know how blessed you are!

Bad men with evil blandishments, and all improper and contaminating associations, the promiscuous motley crowd, is kept from you; some one guards you; you have but to keep within the charmed circle, wear the clothes that are purchased for your pleasure, pursue your studies, become accomplished, and—be happy!

Some day a dear good boy of your own choosing, from your own set, asks you to become his, you accept and are married. You have a great wedding and a fine display, flowers and bridesmaids and soft music and a rose-strewn aisle and all the rest. You walk up the aisle crushing the roses which symbolize the life that is to be yours. Then for a time you are a young hostess and feel the importance of your position of entertaining your friends in your own original way. You dance, maybe, and all the world is yours and you are the happiest Regina that ever sat on a throne



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—the Queen of a loving husband's home.

After a while you become a mother, and if you are the girl you ought to be you simply do what is *right* and what a loving heart dictates, and there is nothing but happiness for you from childhood to the end of the last page of your life.

It is the *only* life, the only sphere for a woman. All else is but the chasing after a bubble that bursts as your hand reaches out to grasp it, and you hold —nothing.

Some sorrow will come, the pain of death, the sweet, painful parting in this world to meet again in the most joyful of moments, the re-uniting in the life beyond the world without end and without sorrow.

Death is a grief that can never torture you like the endless pain a mistaken, sinful life entails upon a woman.

True, God forgives those who err and are truly repentant, but first they

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must expiate their sins, and it takes years to undo a wrong one may have been years in committing. And as for the hereafter, who can say? if we shall still suffer for our mistakes there?

Youth and beauty is part of the price a *woman* pays, and, to her, a dear one indeed.

As for me, what does it matter that I have much of youth left, when I have lost the love that comes but once in a lifetime to some women and to a *very few* men.

What does all the world matter if you must go through it without the one your heart craves!

What does any luxury matter that he cannot share with you? What are beautiful gowns if *he* cannot see them?

Nothing satisfies!

Nothing fills the aching void!

Your loving

IRENE.

*The Price Inevitable.*

DEAR GRACE,—

Christmas day has come and gone, and I am glad. I was selfishly unhappy. Sister had her husband's family to dinner, and there was an exchange of gifts and merry wishes, that I *could not* feel a part in, and I could hardly pretend. My little niece had a gaily brilliant tree, and all her little friends, all so happy, and I thought of my own childhood and past Christmas glories, and I thought of those spent with mamma, happy in being sad with her over *her* memories. I wonder if Christmas ever is merry to older people? Too sad, I fancy, for every one.

I hate anniversaries, anyway.

I thought of the year before, when my aunt was so kind, and all the strange people so nice to me, and I saw Cecil for the first time, and disliked him, because he looked so proud, and afterward loved him for it.

My life is ended.

There is nothing left.

*The Price Inevitable.*

We may live a long time and nothing affect us deeply, or make much difference—go along in a certain routine, and in a month, a week, something happens to make all the rest of our life different ; to change everything. I realize that I have always been vain and selfish, and it is hard now to try to live for others, and be sad with them in their grief and happy in their joy, and have little or no thought of self.

If it wasn't for mamma—

Yes, I was selfishly morbid Christmas eve, and I wanted to be to myself, wanted to go and lie face downward—somewhere out on the cold soft earth, under the dome of Heaven, the starlit sky.

Life all done, at my age !

Oh it is dreadful, dreadful !

If he had died, even ; but this longing for him, knowing he was so nearly mine, and not knowing just when and how I lost him ; only thinking how—and blaming myself. Longing for him every hour in the day, and especially in

*The Price Inevitable.*

the evening when twilight comes—perhaps, because I saw him most *then*.

Thinking of those nights in Globe when we were alone beneath the stars in the blue moonlight, and we seemed so near to each other—that can never be lived over again. He fills my every thought; nothing else interests me, nothing.

If I could only lie in his arms and have him wholly mine for an hour, I could live on the memory forever. If he had said he loved me, if I was sure his love was once the least bit mine, it would not be so hard. Just to know *he had loved me!* But to think he never cared, and never will, not even in those dear moments when we both were ready to confess so much, is unbearable!

And to even think he may have been flirting, in that smooth subtle way that professes nothing, and by every action infers so much. Still, I cannot think he deliberately did that, and I *was* deliberate at first.

*The Price Inevitable.*

I cannot work or read or visit, or do anything. I do not seem to want to occupy my time.

I have the feeling of having *ended* one life, and I don't know when or how to begin another—and one that is so *empty*.

I walk and walk and walk, and cannot walk far enough to get away from myself.

Mrs. Castro comes to see me, and we go out to West Lake park, and she sews on dainty little garments, out there under the palms, and they are so happy. They understand each other better now, and have an all-absorbing interest, and I am—no—not jealous, but I think of the fair-haired, blue-eyed boy I would so like to call son, and I go down town looking for Cecil, and come back all nervous and cross. Once I passed his home, on the opposite side, and my knees trembled so I grew weak, and thought I would fall before I got past. I shall never venture on that street again, because if I should



*The Price Inevitable.*

see him I might make a scene, and it would do no good. And I want him to think I have a little pride left. I want him, who has so much, to think I have some, though God knows I have not a bit. I have no sense or emotion left—only my great love and longing for him, and—regret.

At least he did one great thing—he made of me a pure woman, as a man less pure-minded would not have done.

And I *must* live my life out—for others, and be rational and meet people, when *I know it is all ended*. And I have found “the path which few erring women find.” Love and courage lead the way “to light and truth again”—and the price is paid.

AURELIA SIDNER.

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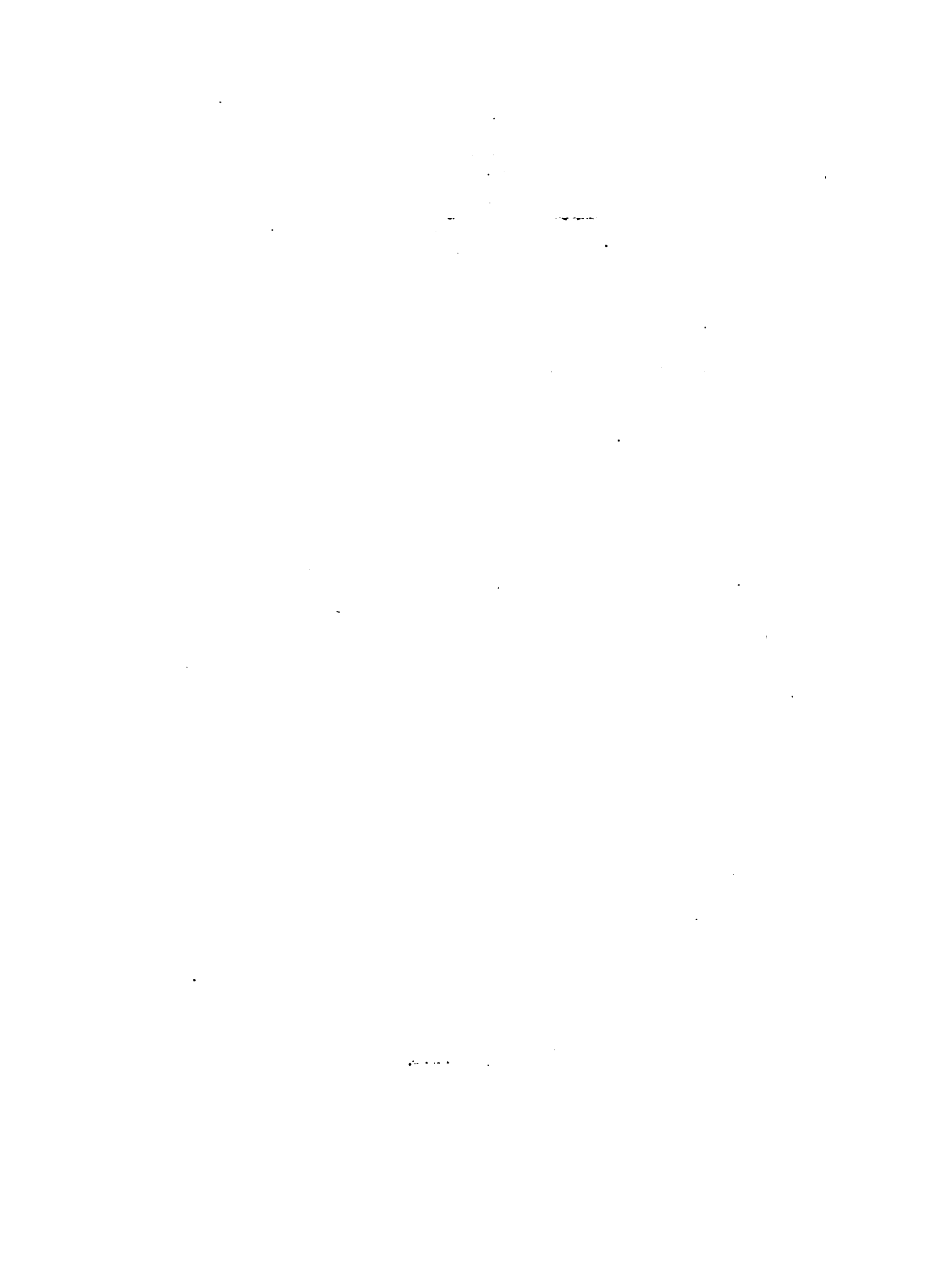
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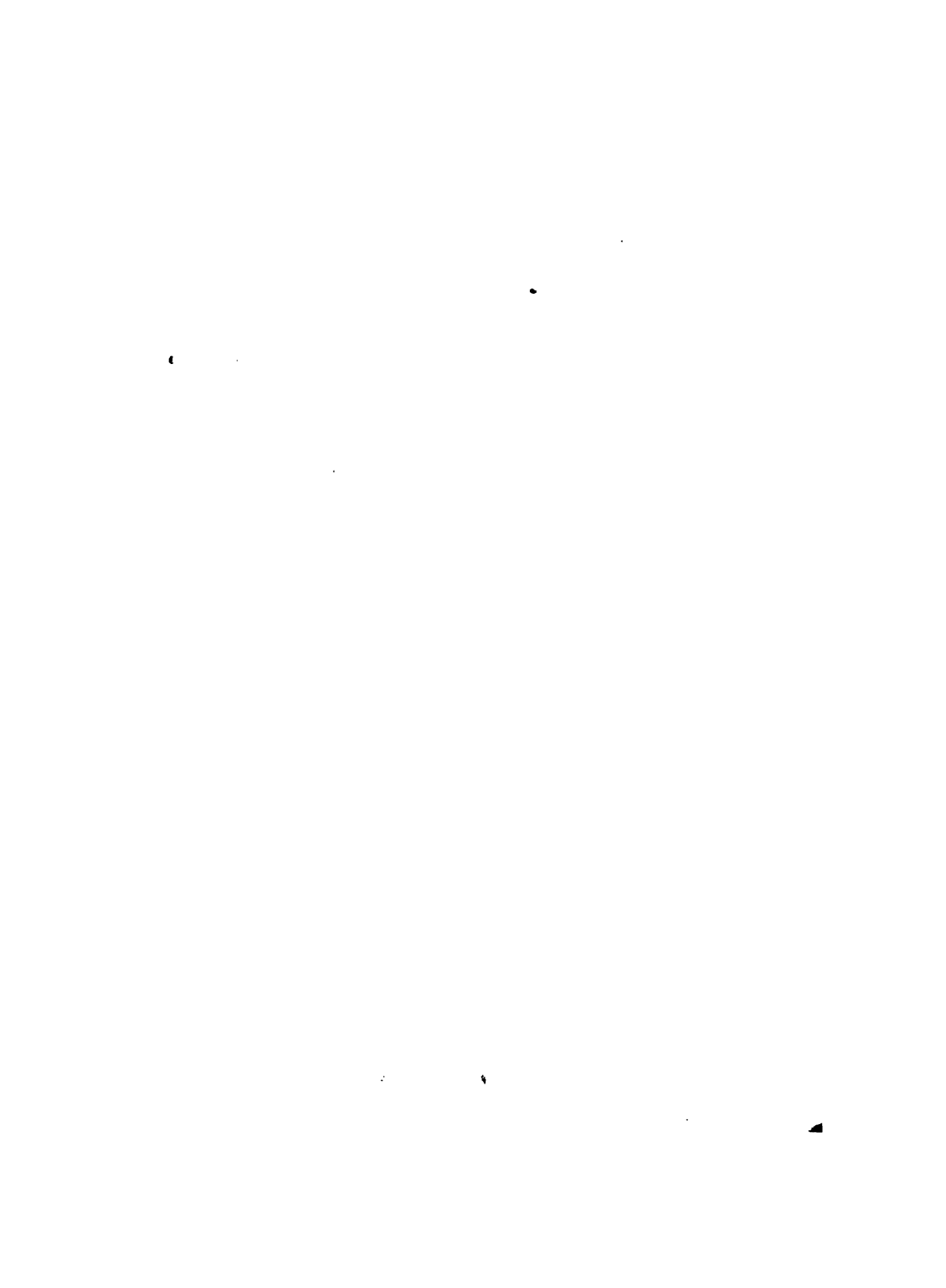
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3. The third step is to analyze the information and data to identify patterns and trends.

4. The fourth step is to develop a hypothesis or solution based on the analysis.

5. The fifth step is to test the hypothesis or solution through experimentation or observation.

6. The sixth step is to evaluate the results of the test and determine if the hypothesis or solution is valid.

7. The seventh step is to communicate the findings of the study to others.

8. The eighth step is to reflect on the process and identify areas for improvement.

9. The ninth step is to apply the findings of the study to other situations.

10. The tenth step is to continue to learn and grow from the experience.

11. The eleventh step is to share the knowledge gained with others.

12. The twelfth step is to stay curious and open to new ideas.

13. The thirteenth step is to embrace challenges and learn from failures.

14. The fourteenth step is to maintain a positive attitude and outlook.

15. The fifteenth step is to stay motivated and committed to the goal.

16. The sixteenth step is to seek feedback and support from others.

17. The seventeenth step is to be patient and persistent.

18. The eighteenth step is to celebrate small victories along the way.

19. The nineteenth step is to stay organized and manage time effectively.

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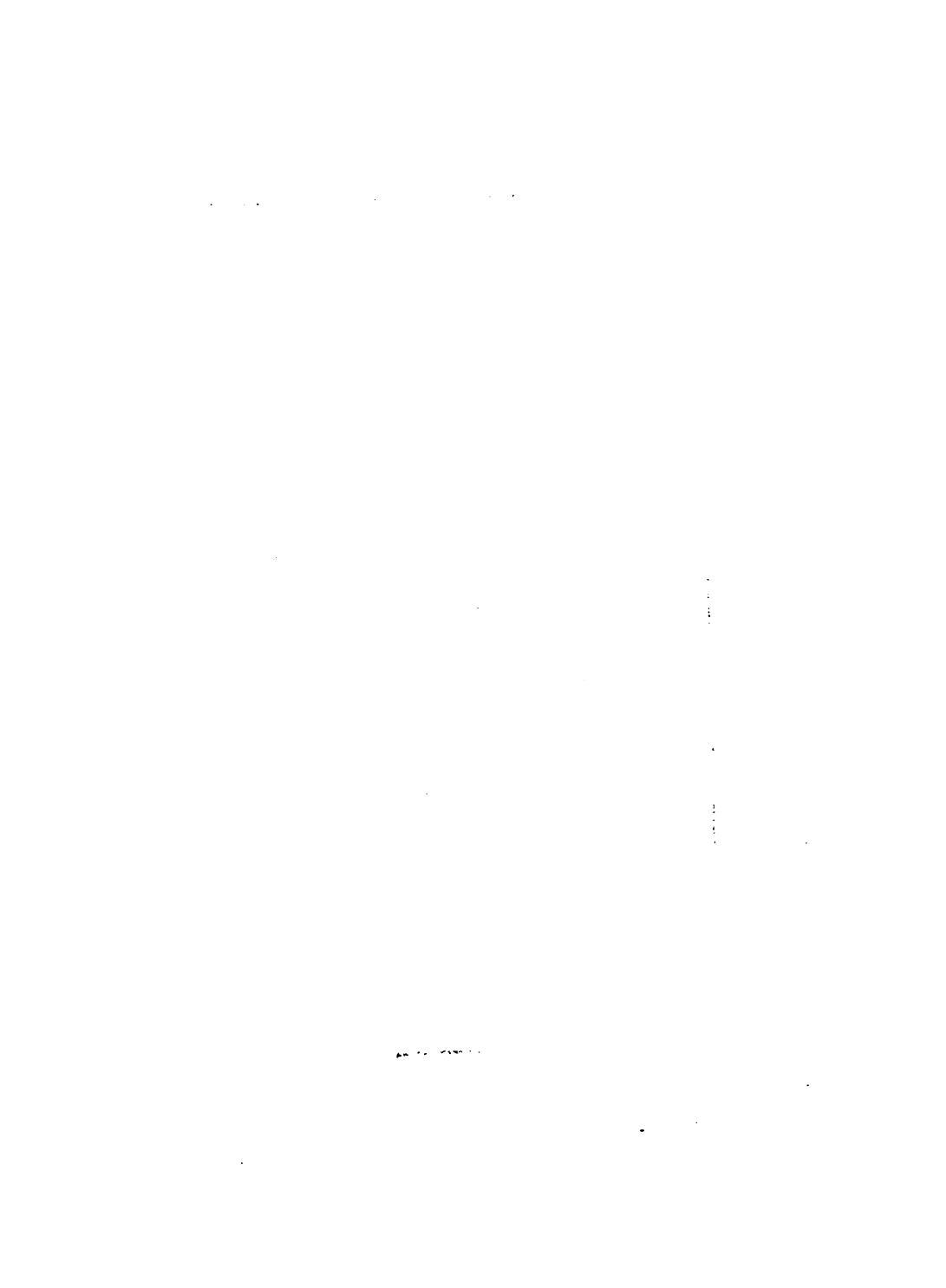
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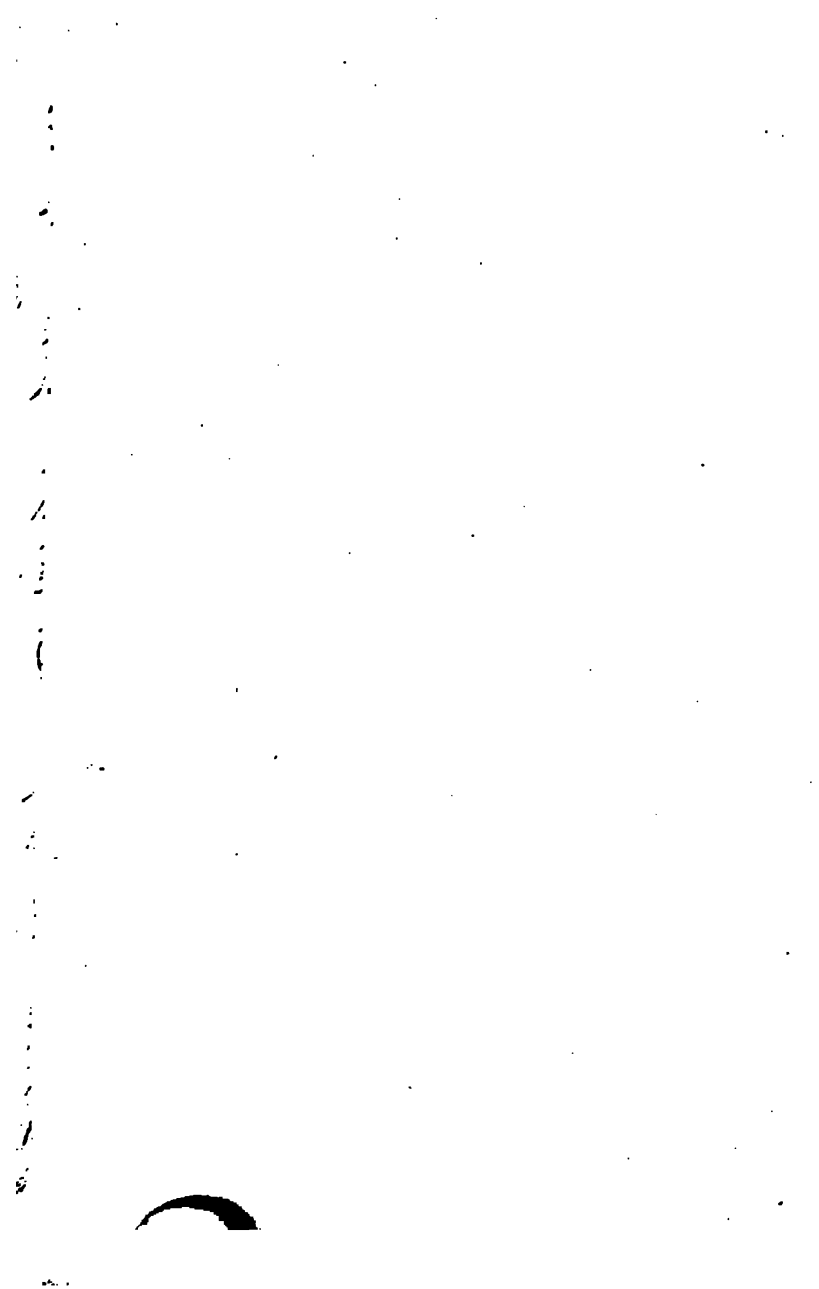
23. The twenty-third step is to be grateful and appreciate the journey.

24. The twenty-fourth step is to stay humble and open to learning.

25. The twenty-fifth step is to stay motivated and committed to the goal.











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